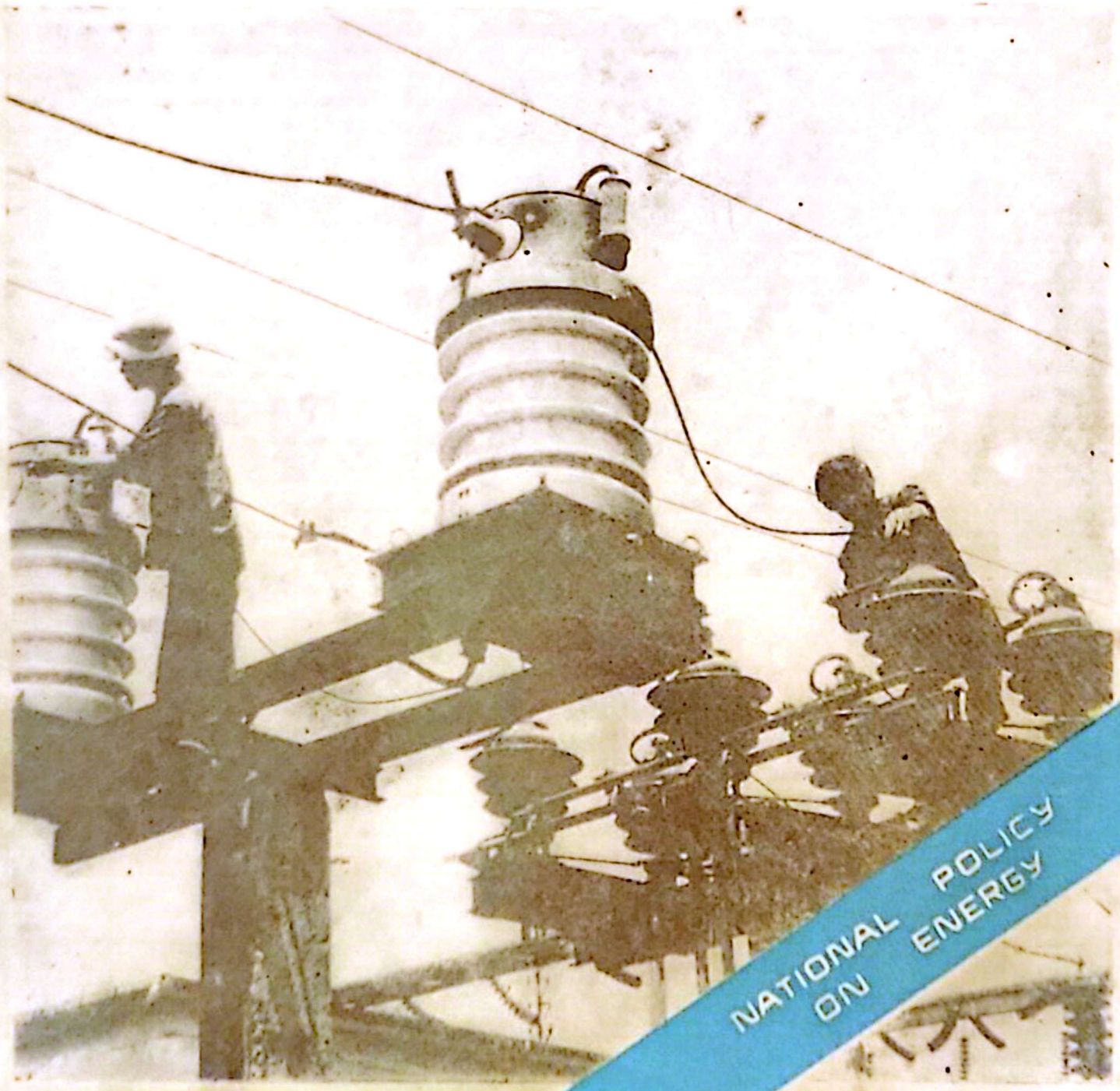
Vietnam Courier

A MONTHLY REVIEW No. 7 – 1987

- Second Plenum of the Sixth CPV Central Committee
- The 1987 General Elections
- Energy Development in the SRV
- Welcome to Vietnam!



NATIONAL POLICY ON ENERGY

DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITIES

● *Talk in Hanoi between the delegation of the Vietnamese National Assembly and that of the Albanian National Assembly. (25 April 1987)*

● *Nguyen Van Linh, General Secretary of the CPV, receiving Mohammad Farouq Karmand, Afghan Ambassador to Vietnam (15 April 1987)*

● *Pham Van Dong, Chairman of the SRV Council of Ministers, receiving a delegation of Australian M.P.s., on a visit to Vietnam. (4 May 1987)*

Photos: VNA

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CALLS FOR PEACE, SECURITY AND STABILITY

In late April 1987, at the Sixth Conference of the Group of 77 held in Havana, Deputy Foreign Minister VU XUAN ANG, *head of the SRV delegation, made an address of which we give below the main points.*

... The economic situation in the developing countries has increasingly deteriorated and is facing serious challenges. Their economic development strategies have generally failed. The prices of primary products have fallen continually and now stand at the lowest level for the past 50 years, sounding the alarm for the economies of about 100 countries which are dependent on the export of primary products. Their balances of payments have shown deficit and many of their investment programmes have had to be slashed. Many exporters of finished products have run into protectionist barriers set up by the developed capitalist countries. The gap in economic development and living standards between the developing countries and the developed capitalist countries has grown wider and wider, and the former's economies have become ever more dependent on the latter's.

The main reason behind this situation lies in the sequels of domination and exploitation by colonialism and imperialism and neo-colonialism, whose main tools are the multinational companies holding key positions in the developing countries' economies.

The present economic difficulties of the developing countries require a fundamental and comprehensive solution. Facts have shown that as long as they remain dependent on the developed capitalist countries economically, they cannot hope for healthy economic development. It is imperative for them to work out an appropriate economic development strategy with a view to gradually building an independent and self-reliant economy. While discussions in North-South forums have reached an impasse the development of South - South cooperation plays an important role in strengthening their negotiating position in those forums.

Facts have also shown that many debtor countries are at present unable to pay their debts. A fundamental and comprehensive solution should be sought which would rest on the principles of joint responsibility of creditors and debtors, and would ensure the latter's right to develop. The SRV delegation highly values the tireless efforts and great contributions made by Cuba and President Fidel Castro in support of the struggle of the debtor countries.

One of the prerequisites for economic development is to have peace, security and stability... More than ever before, closely coordinated action must be taken by peace-loving and progressive forces in the world in order to struggle against the danger of nuclear war, prevent a nuclear disaster, stop the arms race, and consolidate peace and international security. ●

NEW REGULATIONS ON TRANSFER OF MONEY AND CONSIGNMENT OF GOODS FROM ABROAD

The Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on 10 April 1987 ordered the revision of regulations concerning the reception of money and goods sent home by Vietnamese nationals residing in countries other than the socialist countries.

The purpose is to encourage those overseas Vietnamese to help their relatives or contribute to national construction by sending home money, means of production, or essential consumer goods. The decision was followed by Circular 128-CT containing instructions for implementation.

Money should be sent in preference to goods, means of production or essential consumer goods in preference to luxuries. Formalities will be simplified and prompt and full reception ensured.

Concerning money transfer, overseas Vietnamese are free to send home any amount and as frequently as they wish. Recipients will be paid in Vietnamese currency at the current rate of exchange, plus a premium. The State Bank will readjust exchange rates to suit market conditions, with the addition of bonuses. Payment can also be made in foreign currency for recipients to use in accordance with the law, or deposit in banks and receive interests in the same currency. They can withdraw those deposits, plus the interests for their own use or for sending to their relatives abroad, or to take with them when they are allowed to leave the country.

With regard to goods, whose non-commercial import is not forbidden or not subject to conditions, all limits on weight, value and reception frequency are lifted.

Means of production are liable to reduced customs duties, or may be tax-exempted altogether. Consumer goods will be taxed only if they exceed certain amounts.

VAN HOA

CONTENTS

- *Panorama* 1
- *Second Plenum of the Sixth CPV Central Committee* 4
- *Releasing Productive Forces and Reducing the Commodity-Money Imbalance* 6
- *The 1987 General Elections* 9
- *All for the Fulfilment of Our Three Major Economic Programmes* 12
- *Hanoi's Viewpoint* 15
- *On Energy Development Policy in the SRV* 18
- *Development of Electricity in Vietnam* 22
- For Socio-Economic Renovation:
  - — *The National Assembly in a Period of Renovations* 24
  - — *For a Brisk Foreign Trade* 25
  - — *Stable Supply of Raw Materials for the Production of Export Goods* 26
- *Vietnam-Soviet Cooperation in Cinematography* 29
- *Welcome to Vietnam* 30
- *First Vietnamese Violinist of International Standard* 31
- *Chronology* 32

The preparatory work for this issue was completed on 15 May 1987.

Front cover: The national power grid.

Photo: QUANG CAN

VIETNAM COURIER **7-1987**

First published in May 1964
EDITORIAL OFFICE: 46 Tran Hung Dao Hanoi, SRV
DISTRIBUTED BY: Xunhasaba 32 Hai Ba Trung, Hanoi, SRV

NEW FOOD CROP STRAINS DEVELOPED

The Scientific Council and the Council for Strain Selection under the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Industry have recently adopted eight strains of rice and four strains of subsidiary food crops for use in the northern provinces. There have appeared new features in research and development in this field.

In the past, research and experimentation in plant strains concentrated on those to be planted over large areas. Now new strains are also created or selected for small areas. For instance, the IR 50 rice strain can resist damage due to virus, brown hoppers, drought, and is suited to the north-west highlands; the IR 1820-210-2 rice strain is an early spring strain which resists rust, and is suited to rust-affected rice areas in the Fourth Zone.

Another important feature is the creation of hybrid rice strains from Vietnamese strains instead of from foreign ones. They better meet the seasonal requirements. For example, the 1548 spring rice strain bred from the IR 5 and 314 strains, resists cold well and can replace the NN 8 strain on barren soil. The C 10 autumn rice strain can replace Moc Tuyen in the lowlands and stay submerged for five to seven days. The 415 glutinous rice strain can be planted in both spring and autumn and is thus a good complement to spring rice (glutinous rice used to be planted only in autumn).

Four strains of subsidiary food crops have been obtained — an evidence of comprehensive research in food plant strains. The AK 02 soya strain with a short growth cycle (70 — 80 days) can give three crops a year with high yields (8 — 10 metric quintals/ha). The yields of the 59 sweet potato strain which now stand at 10 — 15 quintals/ha), can be raised to 20 — 30 quintals/ha with better care. With a short growth cycle (90 — 105 days) and good resistance to cold (its tubers may develop in temperatures below 15°C), it grows well even in winter. Two maize strains with a short growth cycle, TSB 2 and MSB 49, can be planted in winter between two rice crops. Two crops may be planted on well irrigated soil, the former strain giving 30 — 45 quintals/ha and the latter 46 — 60 quintals/ha.

KIEN AN

ORIENTALISM IN VIETNAM

There has been a growing interest in Orientalism among European and American scholars as they discovered that the wealth of Oriental culture is immense. Since the end of the Second World War there has been an awakening of the Orient, and social scientists including those in the East, have felt the need to push Oriental studies even further in order to explore this development in greater depth.

Over the years the Vietnamese Government has realized the importance of Orientalism. In late 1965, as the US began its airwar against North Vietnam, a college-level *Han - Nom* [1] course was started, following a decision of the Prime Minister's Office by the Literature Institute under the Social Sciences Committee. Among the instructors were well-known professors and scholars. Many of the first graduates have by now become leading scholars in various fields of the social sciences. *Han-nom* is now part of the curriculum of Literature Departments in some Vietnamese universities.

Recently a special *Han-nom* course which was to last three years and a half (1986-89) was started at the Literature Institute. The students come from many institutions such as the *Han-nom* Institute, the Literature Institute, the History Institute, the Folklore Institute, the History Department of Hanoi University, the Binh-Tri-Thien Teacher-training College, the Hanoi Society of Buddhists. During the first year, the students studied the *Book of Calligraphy*, the *Analects*, the *Book of Odes*, the *Ta Truyen annals*, etc.

After completing the course, they will have learnt enough of the ancient, medieval and modern philosophies, histories and literatures of China, Vietnam and some other Oriental countries, to be able to handle common *Han-nom* texts.

VIET NHAN

1. Han: *classical Chinese*. Nom: *demotic script of ancient Vietnam*.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PRESERVATION OF DOCUMENTARY FILMS

A conference was held in Hanoi from 2 to 4 April 1987 by heads of film archives in socialist countries, with the participation of representatives from 11 countries: Bulgaria, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Kampuchea, the Korean People's Democratic Republic, Laos, Poland, the Soviet Union and Vietnam.

The Conference noted that many cinema archives have improved their organizations and personnel training, applying modern scientific and technical methods to the preservation of films with considerable success. The propagation of documentary films has been stepped up resulting in better international cooperation in the exchange of films and the projection of documentary films related to various topics in fraternal countries.

The Conference discussed a number of problems aimed at strengthening and broadening cooperation between the film archives of fraternal socialist countries and at improving film preservation; preventing damage due to damp and other unfavourable climatic conditions; standardizing technical equipment; using video technology and computers in establishing film inventories; raising the quality of the propagation and use of documentary films and training competent cadres.

The Conference decided to project this year in all socialist countries Soviet documentary films on the theme: "70th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution — its role and impact upon socialist cinematography".

The participants in the Conference visited documentary film archives in Hanoi and discussed measures to help Vietnam preserve its treasure of documentary films on the two resistance wars, against French colonialist then US imperialist aggressions.

The Conference also decided on urgent measures to help the People's Democratic Republic of Laos and the People's Republic of Kampuchea in building film archives of their own, first of all with regard to storage facilities and cadre training.

THANG TAM

SECOND PLENUM OF THE SIXTH CPV CENTRAL COMMITTEE

(EXCERPTS FROM THE COMMUNIQUE)

The Second Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam met from 1 to 9 April 1987. NGUYEN VAN LINH, *General Secretary of the Party Central Committee, delivered the opening and closing speeches.*

The Second Plenum of the Central Committee carried out one of the important tasks set by the Sixth Party Congress, namely to solve urgent questions concerning goods circulation and distribution. The conference noted that since the general readjustment of prices and wages and the monetary reform in late 1985, the situation in goods circulation and distribution has continually deteriorated. This has had a very bad impact on all productive and trading activities and on social life. This is the combined effect of many factors on economic and social life. *Its main cause, both direct and deep-rooted, is the prolonged existence of the centralized bureaucratic subsidy-based system of management, which violates objective laws of economic management.*

The way to solve the above situation, one that is both fundamental and urgent, is to abolish that system and shift to socialist economic accounting based on the principle of democratic centralism in order to make the whole system of production and circulation function in accordance with objective laws and to quickly increase the social product.

The Plenum pointed out: the settlement of the urgent questions regarding goods circulation and distribution aims at reducing budget deficit, the rate of price increases, the rate of inflation, and the difficulties in the life of the working people, by abolishing bureaucratic centralized management, shifting to socialist economic accounting; by emphasizing the leading role of the State sector of the economy while developing the positive aspects of the other economic sectors; by expanding the flow of commodities and releasing the productive forces.

(...)

The Plenum adopted the following important policies and measures:

Concerning goods exchanges between the State and the peasants.

Except their tax contribution, which is obligatory, from now on it is forbidden to all branches and echelons to demand from the cooperatives, production collectives and peasant families any "mandatory deliveries of products" and other contributions detrimental to them. The slogan "let the State and the people join hands" should be better implemented. The agricultural tax shall be amended in a way that encourages production. The cooperatives and production collectives must fix reasonable contract quotas for their members. The tax rate and contract quotas shall remain unchanged up to 1990.

All transactions between the economic organisations of the State and the cooperatives, production collectives and peasant families must be based *on the principle of equality, mutual consent, and consolidation of the worker-peasant alliance.*

The State will readjust the rate of exchange between agricultural materials and farm products in such a way as to stimulate production. The buying prices of paddy and other farm products, both under and outside the contracts signed with the peasants, must be based on mutual consent and ensure for the peasants, in normal production conditions, besides the recovery of the necessary social expenditures, profits representing 30 - 40% of production costs.

(...)

After accomplishing their tax obligation and fulfilling their contracts with State economic organisations, the cooperatives, production collectives and peasant families freely dispose of their surplus food, and other farm commodities, except a number of products to be determined by the State.

The Plenum also *decided* on *policy toward State-owned enterprises aimed at a shift to socialist economic accounting,* developing their leading role in the economy, and protecting the interests of the State, the collectives and the working people.

It is necessary to fully and accurately compute both "input" and "output" in order to promote socialist economic accounting. However, we must proceed step by step, so as neither to impede the production and the circulation of goods nor to provoke sudden fluctuations in retail prices. We must keep prices level with the purchasing power of the working people. On the basis of rational price ratios with regard to imports,

the State will fully take into account the costs of materials and the depreciation of fixed assets — this in a selective way depending on the branch of trading. The "output" will be treated in different ways depending on the kinds of products and the kinds of enterprises.

The supply of State-managed materials to State-owned enterprises according to the plan will also be done according to commercial modalities on the basis of contracts, with rational readjustments of prices.

Wholesale prices of products sold to circulation organisations are to be determined on the basis of retail commercial prices (for consumer goods) or wholesale prices of materials (for means of production) minus a circulation discount, so as to ensure accumulation of funds for the State budget right at the production bases. In 1987, there will be a change in the sytem of remittances by the State-owned enterprises. The old method of computing a fixed rate of profit based on the production costs of each enterprise will be abolished.

The State-owned enterprises are allowed to act in various ways to mobilize funds from collectives and individuals in the country and from overseas Vietnamese.

The Plenum also *decided on policies toward small-scale industries and handicrafts.*

Further steps will be taken to institutionalize and concretize policies toward the private individual and private capitalist sectors of the economy in the spirit of the Sixth Party Congress so as to encourage people to make investments in production and trading, and encourage all forms of pooling of funds, cooperation and collective enterprise, from a low to a high level and all forms of cooperation with the socialist economic sector.

To the small industrial and handicraft establishments (collective, family, individual or private capitalist), the State trading organisations will sell raw and other materials at commercial prices (the same as applied to the State sector) and will pay for their products prices to be mutually agreed upon, chiefly through economic contracts concluded on an equal footing. The producer has the right to freely dispose of his products not included in the contracts, according to the general State policy on the circulation of commodities. The pricing of contracted products will be made by mutual consent and in such a way as to ensure appropriate income and profit for the producer. All acts of coercion, all manifestations of authoritarianism and other negative practices are banned. Commercial subcontracting shall chiefly involve products made from rare valuable materials. Enterprises producing export products are entitled to use part of their foreign-currency earnings to import raw and other materials for continued production.

The tax system regarding small-scale industry and handicrafts will be more favourable compared with the commercial sector. Taxes will be reduced or tax exemptions may be granted with regard to a number of export products and to those establishments which have just begun operations or are being expanded to serve priority economic targets. The State will adopt a unified policy of taxation. The provinces and localities are forbidden to impose any taxes other than those listed by the State. Strict control will be effected over the return and payment of taxes, and due sanctions will be taken against tax fraud and evasion.

Economic and social policies toward the collective, individual and private capitalist sector will be reviewed in order to eliminate all prejudices and regulations of a discriminatory character contained therein (as in the granting of credit, the supply of raw and other materials, the recruitment of students and personnel, the admission of children to government-run crèches and kindergartens, etc.)

Operations in the fields of material supply, home and foreign trade, and transport, must radically change over to business practices, financial autonomy, and accountability for losses and profits.

(...)

The Plenum also took *decision on import and export policy and the rates of exchange between Vietnamese and foreign currencies.*

* * *

The Plenum affirmed that we must urgently reduce difficulties and gradually stabilize living conditions for workers, public employees and members of the armed forces; step by step solve the question of wages and living conditions in an active and steady manner consistent with the results achieved in production and the ability of the State to balance the budget and to balance money and commodities. To meet this demand there must be comprehensive measures. Most importantly, the settlement of the question of wages must be linked with the reduction of price increases. We must stimulate and assist the development of the household economy in both the productive and service industries. Workers and public employees are allowed to work on their own to earn additional incomes outside factory and office hours. It is not possible at present to make immediate changes to the wage system as promulgated in September 1985, but only partial readjustments mainly of wage scales for skilled workers and scientific and technical workers. At the same time, the application of piecework and bonuses will help reduce the

(Continued on page 7)

RELEASING PRODUCTIVE FORCES AND REDUCING THE COMMODITY—MONEY IMBALANCE

Editor's Note: *At the Second Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, held in Hanoi on April 1—9, 1987, General Secretary* NGUYEN VAN LINH *delivered important speeches at the opening and closing sessions.*

The following excerpts from his closing speech deal with a burning question of our national economy: the circulation and distribution of goods. The title is ours.

Our conference has decided on questions of both short-and long-term importance in the domain of circulation and distribution of goods. However, the effect of these decisions will not be limited to this domain, but will also be felt in the whole process of reproduction, the kingpin of which is direct production. Marx wrote: "Circulation and distribution are at the same time the premise, condition and outcome of production". That is why, to try to solve the question of goods circulation and distribution is also to try to unravel the tangles in the "input" and "output" of the production process. In this domain we cannot be satisfied with the settlement of such questions as rationing, relations between price levels, prices and wages, budgetary and monetary indices; we must also tackle crucial questions regarding policies, mechanisms and organisation. Experience shows that if these questions are overlooked or made light of, we shall not be able to solve the question of circulation and distribution and make it a strong lever stimulating production. The key note of our policies is to correctly handle the economic interests of all so as to create a strong motive force for production and trading in agriculture, industry, trade, finance and the monetary system. In a country of small-scale agricultural production and heavily devastated by war like ours, where food is central to the people's life, the road to large-scale socialist industrialization should, as Lenin said, "start from agriculture and the peasants". Correct policies will arouse their ardour for production, and consolidate and strengthen the worker-peasant alliance in the new conditions. In that sense, the lowering of the rate of exchange between fertilizer and paddy, the stabilisation of the tax level and contract quotas over a number of years, and the basing of all economic relations between the State and the peasants except the obligatory tax payment, on the principle of equality, price parity, and mutual consent, as presented in the resolution, are clear manifestations of the above-mentioned Leninist principle. In industry, due attention to the producer's interests is reflected in the policy of making wholesale prices equal to retail prices minus the commercial discount, and in the programme to restore wages to the level of September 1985 and include them fully in the production costs. In banking, the value of deposits and an appropriate interest rate will be guaranteed, etc.

On the other hand, due attention must also be paid to the interests of the State. What is new in the resolution is the recognition of this principle and the demand for its full observance: the volume of materials and commodities to be delivered by the State to the peasants must correspond to the amount of products to be delivered by the peasants to the State. Likewise, in industry, full and accurate computation of the "input" and "output" in production shall be made step by step, because this is the best way to ensure the interests of the State and those of the working people in the present conditions. The "output", however, must under no circumstances provoke disturbances and cause sudden spiralings of prices as has been happening.

The Second Plenum of the Central Committee has in its collective wisdom found concrete economic forms to ensure the harmony of different interests. Only on the basis of the unity of all interests can individual interests be assured. The interests of the State are contained in those of the peasants and workers and vice versa. Favouring only one side will, in the end, harm both.

The underlying idea of all policies and measures on goods circulation and distribution adopted by the Second Plenum of the Central Committee is the abolition of the centralized bureaucratic system of management based on government subsidies and a gradual shift to socialist economic accounting. This is an imperative demand of our national economy. Experiences over the past years have taught us that so long as we continue to remain prisoner of the old mechanisms and of outmoded concepts divorced from life, we shall find no way out of the present situation. This idea lies at the core of the resolution just adopted. It has found expression in the relatively general shift to the commodity-money relationship: the State sells agricultural materials to the peasants and purchases their paddy on the basis of mutual consent and price parity both within and outside the economic contract; the State sells raw materials and equipment to the industrial, small industrial and handicraft enterprises at reasonable prices; abolition of arbitrary checkpoints on land and water routes; reduction of subsidies by the State bank; cash payment of the bigger part of wages; gradual restoration of real wages; the shift of banking operations to money transactions, etc.

The expansion of the flow of goods and the abolition of arbitrary checkpoints on land and water routes alone have had visible effects in many places, particulary in Ho Chi Minh City.

According to reports reaching the Secretariat of the Party Central Committee, the amount of rice brought to the city by the peasants has risen to hundreds of tonnes daily and the price of rice has dropped by more than five *dong* a kilogramme, helping to ease the pressure on State-run rice shops. This is due to the support of the free market — an important regulatory factor which we should not make light of. Accompanying the drop in the price of rice, the prices of a number of other necessities have also fallen. The scarcity of a number of commodities has been lessened. It is clear that when economic decisions conform to the objective laws governing the commodity-money relationship they will be readily accepted and great potentials will materialize.

In economic accounting, the essential point is to fully control the great wealth coming from loans by the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. If this wealth continues to be used in providing subsidies to enterprises as has been done so far, it cannot bring the desired result. We must not only avoid losses, but also make good use of this wealth in production and trading in every basic unit as well as in the whole of the national economy in order to ensure its gradual repayment on schedule. Eventually not only will the State be able to terminate all subsidies, but will earn profits.

This means a bitter struggle not only on the ideological plane but also in the practical domain of economic management, in the fields of planning, operations, organization and personnel policies. There must be a vigorous and simultaneous forward motion in all these domains. On the organizational plane, we must urgently rearrange the whole system of trading in materials, equipment and commodities, reducing intermediary links and ensuring a direct flow to the consumers as far as possible.

At the same time, we must eliminate administrative overstaffing, including in the productive sector, by fixing a wage fund and creating favourable material conditions for redundant personnel to find useful productive and service jobs. Besides, self-financing business organisations must be quickly set up: food companies, companies of the Home Trade Ministry, the Supply Ministry, the Foreign Trade Ministry, the State Bank and the Communications and Transport Ministry.

By firmly grasping that spirit and practising it, we shall be able to achieve the four reductions: reduction of the rate of inflation, reduction of the rate of price increases, reduction of the rate of budget deficit, and reduction of difficulties in the living conditions of wage-earners, of members of the armed forces and the security forces, the pensioners, the working people in both the urban and rural areas. This will create the basic conditions for releasing productive forces and reducing the imbalance between commodity supply and the money in circulation, gradually stabilizing the socio-economic situation, and acting upon Lenin's recommendation: "Quickly put an end to the magic of printing money to cover our expenditures". ●

SECOND PLENUM...

(Continued from page 5)

egalitarian and other irrational features in the present wage system.

The communiqué then laid down orientations and measures for the settlement of the question of wages and living conditions for the above-mentioned categories.

In conclusion, the communiqué said:

The application of urgent measures concerning goods circulation and distribution faces innumerable difficulties but also benefits from favourable conditions. We must launch a revolutionary mass movement to be combined with a campaign to purify the Party organisations and the State apparatus and to make social relations healthy. Party organisations at all echelons must clearly tell the people the difficulties the country is facing, the remedies envisaged by the Party and the State, and point to the responsibilities of each person, each Party organisation and each mass organisation with a view to the implementation of these policies. Everyone must be made to understand that the essential point is for all levels of authority, all branches of activity, all units at the grassroots to vigorously shift to socialist economic accounting, and strive to develop production, attain high productivity, products' quality and economic efficiency and practise stringent economy, thereby promoting the interests of the State, the collectives and individual working people.

The Second Plenum of the Sixth Central Committee of the Party calls on the entire Party and the entire people to fully grasp the situation and our tasks, to bring into full play their sense of mastery over society, to unite and be determined to carry out immediately the urgent policies and measures on goods circulation and distribution, thereby contributing to stabilizing the socio-economic situation, the goal set forth in the resolution of the Sixth Party Congress. ●

ONE MONTH AFTER THE REMOVAL OF CONTROL STATIONS ALONG HIGHWAYS

In the past owing to economic difficulties and the imbalance between demand and supply, strict control on the flow of goods — agricultural products and foodstuffs in the first place — was enforced. As a result, the market was partitioned while dishonest traders engaged in smuggling and price manipulations to the detriment of the consumers. To redress the situation, on 11 March 1987, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers issued Decision 80 CT ordering the removal of control stations set up along provincial and inter-provincial communication lines as from 20 March 1987 so as to allow a free flow of goods and remove barriers restricting and dividing the market according to administrative boundaries. This important administrative measure conforms to present economic realities and has been warmly hailed by the people.

On the day the Decision took effect, throughout the country control stations in all provinces, cities, special zones — including joint interdepartmental control stations, mobile control stations of provinces, stations established by districts and communes — ceased operating. Control aimed at ensuring traffic safety, security and order, as well as customs checks on imported goods are maintained.

One month after the implementation of the Decision, its positive impact has been deeply felt in many places. Following are some initial observations:

Travel is easier. Starting from Ho Chi Minh City, a bus now takes only half a day (instead of one day) to reach Hau Giang, Minh Hai, An Giang, one day and one night (instead of two or three days) to get to Binh Tri Thien.

Transport of goods is also faster. More agricultural products and other foodstuffs are brought to cities and towns, particularly the major cities; more sea products reach the mountainous provinces and more highland products come to the plains. Industrial consumer goods made in the big cities find their way to the districts, townlets and rural markets. The prices of many commodities in a number of localities are stabilized or reduced, while in some places those of certain goods on the free market are lower than those in State shops. In Quy Nhon, (Nghia Binh province) the prices of electrical appliances are down 8 — 20%, those of fabrics 10 — 15%, those of bicycle parts 15 — 20%; those of aluminium, cast-iron and recycled plastic articles 5 — 10%, that of gourmet powder (monosodium glutamate) 7%; and those of many kinds of cigarettes as much as 50 — 57%. The prices of meat, fish, vegetables and beans have remained stable.

In Vung Tau — Con Dao, the price of rice falls by 10 *dong*, that of sugar by 30 *dong*, those of gourmet powder and watches are also down. In Song Be province, the price of pork (slaughter weight) is reduced by 50 *dong*/kg, that of (shelled) groundnuts by 10 *dong*/kg. In Minh Hai, the prices of fabrics, gourmet powder and sugar are 8 — 10% down. Tien Giang has decided to reduce the retail prices of 19 kinds of goods. In Dac Lac and Gia Lai — Kontum the prices of many commodities like sea fish, fish sauce, soap, sugar, gourmet powder, cigarettes, vermicelli... are reduced by 30 — 50%. The price of coffee beans falls from 700 *dong* to 500 *dong*/kg, that of cigarettes in Da Lat from 70 to 60 *dong* a packet, steamed fish from 250 to 200 *dong*/kg.

Despite its communication facilities with the provinces in the Mekong delta, Ho Chi Minh City used to receive only 150 — 200 tonnes of rice a day. Now it gets 500 — 600 tonnes, and the price has been reduced by 3 — 5 *dong*/kg while less rice is sold by State stores. The City has decided to lower the price of rice sold by State stores by 5 *dong*/kg. The amount of grain brought to the An Lac rice market has increased 3 — 4 times. Every day, 50 tonnes more meat are sent to the City. Such commodities as meat, sugar, bean sprouts are cheaper by 10 — 20 *dong*/kg.

In Hanoi, apart from the still inadequate supply of food grain, the volume of other agricultural products and foodstuffs has increased. Every day, the City receives, in addition to the usual figures, over one hundred tonnes of vegetables and fruits, hundreds of thousands of eggs and a sizable amount of buffalo meat, beef and poultry. As for pork, it is sold by State stores at a relatively stable price since early this year, and more is being brought by suburban peasants after their contractual sales to the State.

The Decision also helps stimulate the peasants in their effort to boost production, and livestock breeding.

(Continued on page 14)

THE 1987 GENERAL ELECTIONS

On Sunday 19 April 1987, a festive atmosphere prevailed all over the country. Over 31 million people went to the polls to choose their representatives to the National Assembly and to district and communal people's councils.

In these elections to the Eighth National Assembly, progress was observed in both content and procedure due to the new spirit generated by the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam.

Preparations for the elections were carefully made. The presentation of candidates and publication of the lists of voters were completed in time and in conformity with the law. The candidates were presented by the Vietnam Fatherland Front after consultations with the working people, political parties and mass organizations in the districts in which the candidates lived and worked.

The number of candidates exceeded by far the number of deputies to be elected so as to give the voters a wide choice.

At the elections to the last Seventh National Assembly (1981) there had been 614 candidates for 496 elected deputies. This time the number of deputies was the same but that of candidates was 827.

In the provinces, constituencies were smaller: they numbered 167 this time, as against 93 in the last elections. This facilitated the exercise of voters' right. Old infirm people and invalids had ballot boxes brought to their homes. Hospitals, resthomes, maternity-homes with more than 50 voters could have their own polling booths. In the Vung Tau — Con Dao special zone, helicopters brought ballot boxes to workers on oil platforms.

At all polling stations, information work had enabled the voters to get acquainted with the biographies and qualifications of the candidates. From the beginning of April to the eve of election day, the candidates met voters, listened to their opinions and wishes and made known their programmes of action.

According to preliminary figures supplied by the Central Election Committee, voters' turnout in the whole country was 98.92% (against 97.96% in elections to the last National Assembly): 99.32% in Hanoi, 99.43% in Ho Chi Minh City. In Ha Tuyen, a province on the northern frontier, it was 96.37%. While voting time was to end only at 7 p.m. of election day, 19 April, almost all votes had been cast by noon of that day. Particularly on the Truong Sa islands, voting was virtually completed at noon. In some localities the peasants went to the polls even before the opening hour so as to start work early in the fields.

In all 485 deputies were elected on 19 April 1987. The required number being 496, according to the election law, voting was held in Hau Giang, Long An, Vinh Phu, Quang Nam — Da Nang, Lang Son, Quang Ninh and Cao Bang provinces on 3 May 1987 to elect 11 more.

Party and State leaders presented by the Vietnam Fatherland Front to stand for election in various localities all received a high percentage of the votes. President of the State Council Truong-Chinh and Chairman of the Council of Ministers Pham Van Dong and a number of other leaders did not offer themselves for election on the grounds of their health condition and advanced age.

People's Councils at various echelons — district, commune and equivalent — were also elected on 19 April 1987.

NEW THINKING ON PEACE AND WAR

TUYET HONG

Editor's Note: Progressive mankind is looking forward to the 70th anniversary of the October Socialist Revolution. The land of the great Lenin has consistently pursued a policy of peace among nations. Early last May, the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam issued a resolution on the celebration of this major event in Vietnam. On this occasion we present below some reflections on the new political thinking of our era, the first signals of which have come from the Soviet Union.

∴

Broad segments of world public opinion are optimistic about the possibility for the Soviet Union and the United States to reach some sort of agreement on the removal of medium-range missiles of both sides from Europe. The Soviet Union, for its part, has also declared its readiness to consider the reduction of other types of missiles and other weapons.

The dynamic and flexible diplomacy of the Soviet Union in recent years has revealed great potentials in the struggle of nations and progressive mankind to prevent and eliminate the danger of a nuclear holocaust which is hanging over mankind like a Damocles Sword. Never in history has mankind faced such a horrible danger. Fortunately, it is not a fatality. There is a real possibility to avert it and defend mankind's existence.

A very important gain has been the defeat of the imperialists' policy of nuclear blackmail and the removal of their nuclear monopoly and superiority. The Soviet Union has quickly moved forward to nuclear parity with the United States and is now strong enough to face its challenge. It is sufficiently well equipped to compel its adversary eventually to accept the elimination of mass-destruction weapons. The struggle to eliminate nuclear weapons has been started and persistently carried on by the Soviet Union and the entire socialist community with the support and participation of the whole of progressive mankind.

The strength and momentum of this global struggle are unprecedented.

The sword they flourish to threaten mankind having proved powerless even to protect their own security, the imperialists, warlike, stubborn and mad with class revanchism as they are, have been forced to come to their senses.

To renovate thinking is a problem posed by life itself because today the situation is completely different from what it was yesterday. Many important political and theoretical questions can no longer be thought of in the same way as in the past, such as the questions of peace and war, peace and revolution, peaceful coexistence and class struggle. Analysing the characteristics of imperialism in the light of Marxism, Lenin drew a number of strategic guidelines and amended a number of Marxist views which no longer suited the new circumstances, e.g., Marx's assertion that imperialist war is inevitable and that when it breaks out the proletariat in each country must transform it into revolutionary civil war. The two world wars provoked by imperialism and their consequences have eloquently substantiated the scientific predictions of Lenin, who took Marxism to a new level.

∴

The nature of capitalism and imperialism is unchangeable and will never change. This last form of private ownership is entering a general crisis and heading for disintegration, and can be saved by no miracle. The class struggle between labour and capital, between socialism and capitalism, between oppressed and despoiled nations and imperialism, is an uncompromising struggle. However, the methods and forms of struggle cannot be the same as in the past. Formerly, two major wars broke out within less than forty years. More exactly, the first war among imperialist countries, the Russo-Japanese war, broke out early in this century and after the First World War, starting from the thirties, the prelude to the Second World War began. For more than forty years now, although contradictions among the imperialist powers have never eased off, a

third imperialist world war has not broken out, and this for two reasons: first, the imperialists are aware that such a war would bring them mutual destruction, and second, they fear a mass uprising and also a possible "attack" from socialism. Thus, the existence of two antagonistic social systems has become a "brake" on the course to all-out imperialist war. In fact, this war has taken on much more complex forms, such as the poultry war, the wine and wheat wars, and more recently, the bitter trade war between the United States and Japan over micro-chips. The contradictions among the three centres of imperialism (the United States, Western Europe and Japan) and the contradictions among the imperialist powers are permanent and irreconcilable. They may lead to military conflicts by proxy. Today, it can be affirmed that an all-out imperialist war is very unlikely (it was still thought of as unavoidable in the early fifties). The contradictions between socialism and imperialism, first of all between their two power centres, the Soviet Union and the United States, have increased to a dangerous level due to the US-initiated nuclear arms race. The equilibrium of strategic nuclear forces is a new and very important factor. Due to this radical change in the balance of forces both sides and the whole of mankind are faced with only two alternatives: either a nuclear war which would blow up our planet or put a definitive end to life on this earth, or the elimination of these means of destruction and the freeing of mankind from the nightmare of Doomsday. The elimination of nuclear and other mass-destruction weapons is realizable because anyone, however insane he may be, who may take it into his head to launch a nuclear war, understands full well that he himself would vanish amid the nuclear clouds and that once life on the whole planet no longer exists, his "free world" will not have survived either. The myths about limited nuclear war, nuclear deterrent, nuclear shield, etc., are mere tranquilizers, a hoax devised by leaders of military-industrial complexes.

The founders of our revolutionary theory held that the proletariat in seeking to transform the world always wanted to do it in the least painful way. However, because the exploiters use violence to maintain their rule, the proletariat must get prepared to cope with it and to establish the new regime through violent means. Right after the birth of the first socialist State in the world, Lenin declared that it had no need for war and that peaceful coexistence was the basic foreign policy of the revolutionary State. At the same time, he called on the Soviet people to do their utmost to increase their defence capabilities and to stand ready to defeat any aggressors. Today, the socialist system is strong enough not only to defend itself but also to deal staggering retaliatory blows to the aggressors right in their lairs. The imperialists have themselves acknowledged that they would run a mortal risk if they should gamble with war.

Furthermore, the nuclear arms race is no inexpensive game for the imperialists. At the rate of 300 billion dollars of military expenditures annually, the arms merchants have been reaping fabulous profits, but the burden of the arms race is weighing unbearably on the American economy and society, whose endurance is not limitless.

Obviously, war and the arms race are not the inevitable way to solve the dispute between the two social systems and the two ways of life. However, so long as the imperialists are scheming to use war to impose their order, the nations must remain on their guard.

∴

Another question relating to war and peace is that of revolutionary violence. It, too, must be examined in the light of the new relationships, the new factors and the new balance of forces in the present-day world.

The socialist system has become the mainstay of world peace and revolution. While developing its superior features and overcoming its infantile disorders, it has shown new vitality, dynamism and flexibility, and socialist democracy and the socialist way of life have proved ever more attractive. Meanwhile, right in the heart of capitalism, the decay of the old society is before all eyes to see. The working class and the other labouring masses, who account for more than 95% of the population, and have acquired ever higher political and cultural standards, have been tempered in struggle and will surely find ways suited to each country in order to change the situation there in a progressive direction and in accordance with the trend of history. The nations, in their effort to change and improve their lives may follow different ways. Revolution is always the work of the masses. Class contradictions in capitalist society will necessarily lead to revolution, and revolution always means creation.

Philosophical and political thinking cannot stop at old conclusions. They must stay close to life. ●

ALL FOR THE FULFILMENT OF OUR THREE MAJOR ECONOMIC PROGRAMMES

Editor's Note: *At a grand meeting marking the 101st International Labour Day and the 12th anniversary of the victory over US aggression (30 April), PHAM THE DUYET, Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam and President of the Vietnam Federation of Trade Unions, made the keynote speech. Following are some excerpts. The title is ours.*

* * *

Esteemed members of the Presidium,
Esteemed members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Dear comrades and friends,

Today, the working class and the labouring masses throughout our country are celebrating the International Labour Day and the anniversary of the victory of the resistance against US aggression.

In the more than one hundred years since the historic 1st May 1886, many changes have taken place on our planet, the most outstanding one being the emergence and continual development of the socialist system starting with the Great October Socialist Revolution of which we shall celebrate the 70th anniversary this year. Thanks to the superiority of the new system, within a short period of history, the Soviet Union and the whole socialist community have recorded important achievements in all fields: political, economic, scientific, technological, cultural, artistic and national defence. Today, renovation has become the main trend involving all branches and all fields, and hundreds of millions of people. It is bringing about far-reaching changes in socio-economic life in the socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union.

In Asia, Africa and Latin America, the movement for national independence, peace and socio-economic development continues to gain momentum. The revolutionary movement of the people of Angola and the countries in southern Africa against apartheid and imperialism continues to rise in defiance of all the threats and acts of intervention of outside reactionary forces. Far from stamping out the courageous struggle of the Palestinian people, the increased US support for Israeli aggression against the Arab countries, particularly Libya and Syria, has only prompted the people in the Middle East to further strengthen their solidarity against the common enemies.

In the capitalist countries, the working class and the labouring masses in general have stepped up their demands for better living conditions, jobs and social progress, and their struggle against the arms race. The vigorous development of science and technology in these countries has not eased the contradictions between labour and capital, instead has exacerbated social contradictions.

Over the past forty years and more, the Asian—Pacific region has been a hot spot of the world. The continuous growth of the Soviet Union, the victory of the revolutionary forces in Asia, and the bitter failure of US imperialism in the Vietnam war, have brought about radical changes in this vast and important region.

(...)

After highlighting our economic and cultural achievements over the past period, Pham The Duyet stressed:

In spite of important achievements, we are facing a very difficult situation:

Agricultural production remains largely dependent on nature. The rise in annual food production is unstable and still falls short of the minimum needs of society. The shortage and irrational distribution of agricultural materials and equipment have impeded the practice of intensive cultivation. In particular, there remain many manifestations of authoritarianism and unfairness in policies governing goods exchanges between the State and the peasants. Oppressive acts and corrupt practices by some people in positions of authority have led to injustice and discouraged

people's ardour for production. The material and cultural life of the peasants in many parts of the country, especially in areas hit by natural calamities and remote areas, remains hard.

The increments in industrial production have not been commensurate with investments and expenditures. Both productivity and product quality remain low, and serious waste has been committed in the utilization of equipment and manpower. The biggest problem for industrial production at present is the shortage of raw and other materials, energy and spare parts, and also the impediments created by bureaucratic centralized management based on government subsidies. There has been a serious lowering of real wages for workers and public employees, which makes it impossible to ensure the enlarged reproduction of the labour force and to stimulate production.

Small-scale industry, handicrafts and the private individual sector of the economy have not received the necessary assistance from the government. Compounding outmoded economic policies, erroneous social policies have led to discriminations which impede production in this sector. Anarchy and tension continue to prevail in goods circulation and distribution. The Government still fails to win control over the sources of commodities and the market, which has resulted in skyrocketing prices and uncontrollable inflation and budget deficit. Serious imbalances plague the economy. Negative social phenomena are on the rise, and order, legality and social justice are not ensured.

The above situation stems from the fact that we have begun socialist construction from a very low starting-point, namely a backward economy which was moreover heavily devastated by thirty years of war. But the immediate and main cause is that we have maintained for too long a managerial mechanism based on bureaucratic centralism and government subsidies. Many of our economic guidelines and policies are characterized by wishful thinking, over hastiness, disregard of objective laws.

To get out of that situation, the Sixth Party Congress has pointed out: "The dominant task and overriding objective for the remaining years of the first stage of the period of transition to socialism is to stabilize the socio-economic situation in all fields and to continue building the prerequisites for socialist industrialisation in the subsequent stage."

To achieve this objective it is of paramount importance to renovate our economic and social policies in order to bring into play the working people's right to mastery and heighten their ardour for work. We must generate a mass movement to carry out the three major economic programmes: the production of food, consumer goods and export goods. In the immediate future, we must solve the question of goods circulation and distribution in the spirit of

Natural gas is used in Tien Hai district (Thai Binh province) in the production of high-quality china and glassware.

Photo: NGUYEN TAN

the Resolution of the second Plenum of the Party Central Committee. This is a vital question having a direct bearing on the people's life and on production, whose solution is eagerly awaited by our entire people.

(...)

Pham The Duyet then dealt with the basic contents of the Resolution of the Second Plenum of the Party Central Committee (featured in this issue). He went on:

To undertake the above tasks means to carry out a far reaching and extremely difficult and complicated revolution. That revolution will inevitably clash with the bureaucratism, conservatism and inertia existing in each person, at each echelon and in each unit. On the other hand, we must oppose subjectivism, over-hastiness and the lack of preparations — material, ideological, methodological, operational, organisational and with regard to personnel. We must correctly and creatively apply the profound lessons summed up by the Sixth Party Congress. These are: to regard the people as the roots, to act in accordance with objective laws, to combine the strength of our revolution with that of our era, and to raise the Party to the level of a party in power. These are invaluable lessons learnt from both our successes and failures, from the practice of the revolution in our country and from the experience gained in fraternal countries over the past years.

We must bear in mind that this renovation can succeed only through the revolutionary actions of tens of millions of working people, with the working class as the vanguard, under the clearsighted leadership of the glorious Communist Party of Vietnam, the guideline being: "Let the people know, discuss, act and control," and "All for the people and by the people." This renovation is to be closely associated with the drive to purify the party and State apparatus and the fight against negative social phenomena. We must resolutely expel from the Party and the State apparatus all those who are abusing their powers to embezzle State property and oppress the masses. This aims at making the Party really pure, increasing the effectiveness of the Party organisations and State apparatus, making social relations healthy, and achieving social justice...

(...)

ONE MONTH...

(Continued from page 8)

The departments of industrial and commercial taxes, forestry, public security, communications, national defence... which used to man control stations along communication lines, now undertake control at the production sources and the consumption places. The Song Be provincial forestry service for instance has sent controllers who used to man stations along the roads to logging camps in Long Nguyen, the former War Zone D, Binh Long, Ma Da, Dong Xoai... and to such forest-exploiting communes as Tan Hung, Tan Loi, Tan Thanh... in order to help controllers there to check the exploitation and transport of forest products at the very sources.

In Ha Bac province, thanks to close coordination between the departments of industrial and commercial taxes, forestry, market management, economic security... initial achievements have been recorded in the struggle against hoarding and contraband, against illegal exploitation of timber and precious forest products. Tax collectors concentrate their supervision on markets, bus stations, landing stages from which the flow of goods starts.

Besides these initial results, however, the shift of control and tax collection to the sources in some places has not been smoothly effected due to lack of preparations and good coordination. In some localities the control authorities hesitate or act half-heartedly. Taking advantage of the confused situation, dishonest traders and smugglers hoard commodities, evade taxes, and engage in illicit operations.

In order to overcome these shortcomings, plug the holes, and effectively expand the flow of goods, the departments of home trade, finance, market management... have adopted concrete measures suited to the situation in each locality. Thus, the department of home trade has shifted to socialist economic accounting, and sought the support of the people, the Party grassroots organizations, the administrative apparatus, the mass organizations, the marketing cooperatives in communes and city wards in order to manage the sources of commodities. That of industrial and commercial taxes concentrates on collecting taxes at production bases, bus stations, landing stages, railway stations, ports, airports... That of economic police and market management strikes hard at hoarders and contrabandists and prevents them from taking advantage of the removal of control stations along communication lines to engage in unlawful operations.

VIET CHUNG

THE FRUITS OF THE APRIL REVOLUTION

Since the April 1978 Revolution, the Afghan people under the leadership of the People's Democratic Party and the Revolutionary Council have repeatedly foiled sabotage schemes by their enemy inside and outside the country and have created deep changes in their society. Starting from scratch, after less than one decade, Afghanistan has built an economy with the state sector and the cooperative sector as the main forces. Besides the tens of enterprises restored from destruction and damage, many large factories have been built anew, like the petrochemical works in Jakoudouk, the textile complex in Kaldaga, the cement factory in Hératé, etc. Investments in economic development over the past five years have surpassed in amount those made in all projects in the 50 years before the revolution. Industrial output has increased by 28%. Care for the life of the working people is the government's primary concern in the first five-year plan for socio-economic development (1986 — 1990). The state has reserved 31 per cent of total investment for education, health care and other social services.

In 1986, the GNP increased by 6.2 per cent over 1980 and the national income by 5.5 per cent. The private sector, encouraged and helped by the state, has set up over one hundred small enterprises, producing necessities. In the countryside, over 350,000 households have been allotted nearly eight million hectares of land. They have also been given loans and supplied with chemical fertilizers, tractors, and seeds. Attention has been paid to developing communications and transport to every part of the country.

Education, health, culture have made visible progress. The Academy of Sciences has been established, and thousands of schools built; 21,000 adult education classes have been opened for 1.5 million people who have been freed from illiteracy. In the last school year, 120,000 pupils graduated from primary and secondary schools. Health-care stations, and stations for mother and child welfare have been built in every province. Compared with the period before revolution, the number of health cadres has increased threefold and that of hospital beds twofold. The spiritual and cultural life of the people has been steadily improved. Pursuing a consistent foreign policy of peace, friendship and non-alignment, the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan has gained ever higher prestige in the international arena.

In response to the aspiration of the people to live and work in peace, and considering the realities in the country early this year, the People's Democratic Party and the Revolutionary Council put forward a policy of national reconciliation. The results achieved in only three months have been very great. Tens of thousands of former opponents of the regime have laid down their weapons and expressed their readiness to enter into dialogue with the revolutionary administration. The Vietnamees people share the joy in the success of the fraternal Afghan people and sympathize with their difficulties. We pledge to do our best to foster friendship and cooperation between Vietnam and Afghanistan. ●

The SRV—DPRK

CONGRATULATIONS ON PRESIDENT KIM IL SUNG

Editor's Note: On 14 April 1987, the State Council of the SRV decided to confer the Gold Star Order on Kim Il Sung, General Secretary of the Korean Workers' Party Central Committee, President of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, on the occasion of his 75th birthday.

We publish hereunder parts of the 15 April 1987 Editorial of the daily Nhan Dan, *Central Organ of the CPV. The title is ours.*

(...)

With this lofty reward, the Vietnamese Government and people expressed their deep sentiments towards Comrade Kim Il Sung, the great leader of the Korean people, an outstanding activist of the international communist and worker movement, a great friend of the Vietnamese people.

Born on 15 April 1912 into a peasant family in the suburbs of Pyongyang, Comrade Kim Il Sung began his revolutionary activities at the age of 14. He has been closely associated with the Korean people's protracted revolutionary struggle for national independence and liberation. As the founder of the Korean Workers' Party and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, he has been for nearly half a century at the head of the Korean Party and State, leading the Korean people's struggle to defeat the cruel war of aggression conducted by the US imperialists and their henchmen, to build socialism successfully, and to step up the cause of peaceful reunification of the homeland.

The Vietnamese communists and people constantly remember the contributions made by Comrade Kim Il Sung to the friendship and fraternal solidarity between the Korean and Vietnamese Parties, States and peoples. We have always kept a deep impression on his official friendship visit to Vietnam in 1958. In our resistance against the US aggressors, for national salvation, Comrade Kim Il Sung, together with the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party, and the Government and people of Korea, extended to our people warm and valuable support. He pointed out that "the Korean Workers' Party and Korean people consider the US imperialists' aggression against Vietnam as an aggression against Korea, and the struggle of the Vietnamese people as their own struggle. We will struggle even more resolutely against our common enemy — the US imperialists — and will make our utmost efforts to support the Vietnamese people."

On this occasion, we warmly congratulate respected and beloved Comrade Kim Il Sung and wish him good health and good success in leading the Korean people jointly with the Central Committee of the Korean Workers' Party, in their efforts to successfully carry out the resolutions of the Sixth Congress of the Korean Workers' Party and to record new, great achievements in the cause of socialist construction and peaceful national reunification. We resolutely support the new project submitted by President Kim Il Sung to the first session of the Eighth Korean National Assembly on high level political military talks between North and South Korea. We firmly believe that, under the leadership of the Korean Workers' Party headed by Comrade Kim Il Sung, the relations between our two parties and peoples will further consolidate and develop in a satisfactory way. ●

GOING AGAINST THE TREND OF THE TIMES

On 23 April, the ambassadors of ASEAN countries in Tokyo demanded that the Japanese Government put an end to the economic relations of Japanese corporations with Vietnam. This was an action which evidenced a short-sighted approach inconsistent with the trend of the times and with the interests of the nations in Southeast Asia and the Asian-Pacific region.

The present-day world constitutes a single market. Many countries having different social regimes, and even contradictions, are maintaining economic relations. That is a fact! Trade between the Soviet Union and the United States, between East European socialist countries and EEC and ASEAN countries have been on the increase, bringing about benefits to both sides. The facts of life have been rejecting more and more strongly the policy of violence — including economic violence — in the relations among various countries. Linking political differences with

trade relations, regarding economy as an instrument of pressure is an inadmissible anachronism.

Vietnam has established trade relations with socialist and non-socialist countries as well, among them ASEAN countries. In future, it will continue to develop and broaden economic ties with other countries provided they are prepared to cooperate with us on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. By opposing economic relations between some Japanese corporations and Vietnam, do the ASEAN countries want to carry on the policy of encircling and "bleeding" Vietnam ? True, as a result of the economic encirclement policy, Vietnam has met with difficulties, but obviously it has not collapsed as some people would wish ; on the contrary, it has continued to march forward and to broaden its international relations. Right in ASEAN countries sober-minded people have urged their governments to maintain economic links, and to increase trade with Vietnam, with the three Indochinese countries. The above inconsiderate action of ASEAN countries cannot bring them results in accordance with their calculations ; on the contrary, it will only damage the real interests of their people.

We deem it necessary to point out that ASEAN's demand on Tokyo is a new evidence of the policy of continued confrontation against Vietnam, a policy that has been strongly criticized by broad public opinion. Economic pressure will only further strain the relations between countries and hinder the dialogue leading to mutual understanding. It is absolutely unhelpful for a solution to the Kampuchean issue and other outstanding regional problems. Only dialogue and mutually beneficial cooperation constitutes the correct way for the nations in this region to resolve differences and to contribute to the common struggle for peace, stability, cooperation and progress. A confrontation attitude only suits the designs of the forces hostile to Vietnam.

The ASEAN's demand on Japan is also an interference in Japan's internal affairs. The development of the present-day world affirms the necessity of establishing the principle of peaceful coexistence. The most correct form of relations between countries is to enter into contact, dialogue and cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. The responsible people in the ASEAN countries should have a way of thinking consistent with the realities and the trend of the times. ●

CHARLES HYDER – A BRIGHT EXAMPLE

Charles Hyder is well-known around the world. He is an American citizen, an astrophysicist, having a lot of scientific activities, and a decent life. However, he did not regret even his life. Voluntarily, he refrained from eating for seven months on end and as he stated he was prepared to die ! He did so only for one demand : the US Administration should stop the arms race because going that way will mean suicide for mankind. At first his noble act was ignored by the White House, nor did the mass media both in the USA and in other Western countries pay enough attention. But progressive mankind was aware of and admired his noble personality. There were letters, telegrams, teach-ins and voluntary committees to call on him to stop his "hunger strike" to save his precious life. The Vietnam Peace Committee sent him a letter. Many world peace organizations stood by his side. And in late April 1987, Charles Hyder decided to stop his action in order to start a new struggle as he told journalists, in a park not far from the White House.

Charles Hyder has stated that he would stand for presidential election in 1988 as an independent candidate with a view to exposing the anti-democratic character of the present election system in the United States, and demanding that the ruling circles heed the people's views and take specific actions for the complete elimination of nuclear weapons.

Charles Hyder is a great example of intellectuals of conscience of the United States and of the world as well. Treasuring human life and human civilization, this American intellectual does not regret his life but is determined to fight against a wrongful, dangerous policy of the American ruling circles. He is a genuine patriot with a noble mind. ●

ON ENERGY DEVELOPMENT POLICY IN THE SRV

Dr. NGUYEN DONG HAI

The implications of a post-war period make the energy situation a bigger problem in Vietnam. Its solution requires some choices, as reflected in the priority directives in the national energy development policy drawn for the last ten years:

Intensifying hydropower tapping;

Accelerating oil and gas prospection and exploitation;

Bracing up the vegetative fuel production;

Promoting research on and application of available new and renewable energies.

Intensifying hydropower tapping as top priority

Vietnam has a very rich hydropower potential, available rather evenly across the country. A tentative assessment gives the technically exploitable potential of national hydropower resources as about 91 billion kwh per year, while total reserves of coal are given as 2.7 billion metric tons. Judging by the possible extent, maximum coal production is estimated at about 20 million metric tons per year. If only 30 per cent of the hydropower potential is put into use, an annual output of 30 billion kwh of hydroelectricity will be available, equivalent to that wishful maximum coal output.

So far, only 2 per cent of the technical potential has been tapped for hydroelectricity production, accounting for only 21 per cent of primary energy source structure of the nation.

Energy development could not rely entirely on coal production for many reasons:

Firstly, opencast mines are producing 80 per cent of the total coal output. But their efficiency is getting lower and lower every year because they are all sinking lower and lower.

Secondly, deep mines in Vietnam, meanwhile, are not mechanized to the extent of ensuring a steady increasing production.

Thirdly, to have a breakthrough in coal production, one needs a very great investment and even if such an input is available, expected efficiency still remains doubtful.

Hydroelectricity is another story: it needs less input, particularly the hard currency for equipment imports. And its performance is free of an investment burden that is a must for thermoelectricity: the production and transportation of a colossal amount of fuel from another location, sometimes very far away, to feed the plant. According to initial calculations production cost of a hydropower station is 5 to 10 times cheaper than that of a thermopower plant of equivalent capacity.

In such a situation, hydropower development implies a multipurpose scheme. Along with electricity, a comprehensive hydropower scheme will provide a good control of irrigation, harness the hostile waterways, create a network of communication and transport channels that also serve as a source of aquatic products.

In addition, big hydropower projects usually take from 5 to 10 years of construction work. This creates jobs for tens of thousands of people. This is meaningful not only in putting into use the available resourceful labour force, but in having a chance and facilities to train a contingent of professional workers for future projects.

Formerly, due to many difficulties caused by war and also to the underestimation of the role played by hydropower in the country's energy system, no efforts had been made to build any new hydroelectric plant for 15 years on end since the completion of the first two which were often overloaded to the detriment of regular power supply.

In the early 80's, two hydroelectric projects of large size and medium size were started respectively in northern and southern Vietnam. They are planned to be brought into operation by 1987 and when they reach full capacity, the total output will amount to 11 billion kwh per year, or 18 per cent of the economically exploitable potential, thus increasing considerably its share in the country's energy structure.

However, due to lack of experience in energy planning, attention was primarily given to big projects requiring great investments and prolonged construction, which has resulted in the present acute energy shortage. A balance should have been struck between hydro-projects of different sizes in order to ensure stabilized supply and steady growth.

In addition, in view of the fact that in general, hydropower stations can operate at only one-third of their installed capacity in the dry

season when water is in short supply, a complementary thermoelectric network should be constantly in service to keep the total output stabilized.

Accelerating oil and gas prospection and active preparation for oil exploitation and processing

In the primary energy consumption pattern in Vietnam, non-commercial sources (mainly fuelwood) and coal account for on overwhelming part (66.5 and 17.3 per cent respectively) whereas the share of oil — the only imported energy source — takes a very humble position in the balance: 11.4 per cent.

Oil import has exclusively come from the Soviet Union on favoured terms independent of the world's pricing system. So far regular supply has been ensured annually in accordance with plans agreed upon between the two governments for every 5-year period.

Vietnam is not an oil-consuming country. The most widely used individual vehicle is the bicycle and other non-motor-driven facilities. Public transport is very popular.

Nevertheless, with a view to lessening the dependence on oil as much as possible and to anticipating any kind of emergency, a number of measures have been adopted over the past decade.

First of all, a nation-wide campaign for economizing oil utilization has been launched and sustained. The practice is based on a restructured energy usage pattern and applied more intensively in southern Vietnam where petroleum-based fuels used to account for more than 74 per cent of total energy consumption. For this, prompt actions have been taken to restore in due time the regional hydropower stations and to bring coal from the North to substitute for oil in different usages. This effort has its result in the reduction of oil import from 2.5 million tons a year (in 1979) fast down to about 1.5 million tons and this minimum level has been maintained all through the past decade just to cater for the most needy oil consumption sectors indispensable in the national development.

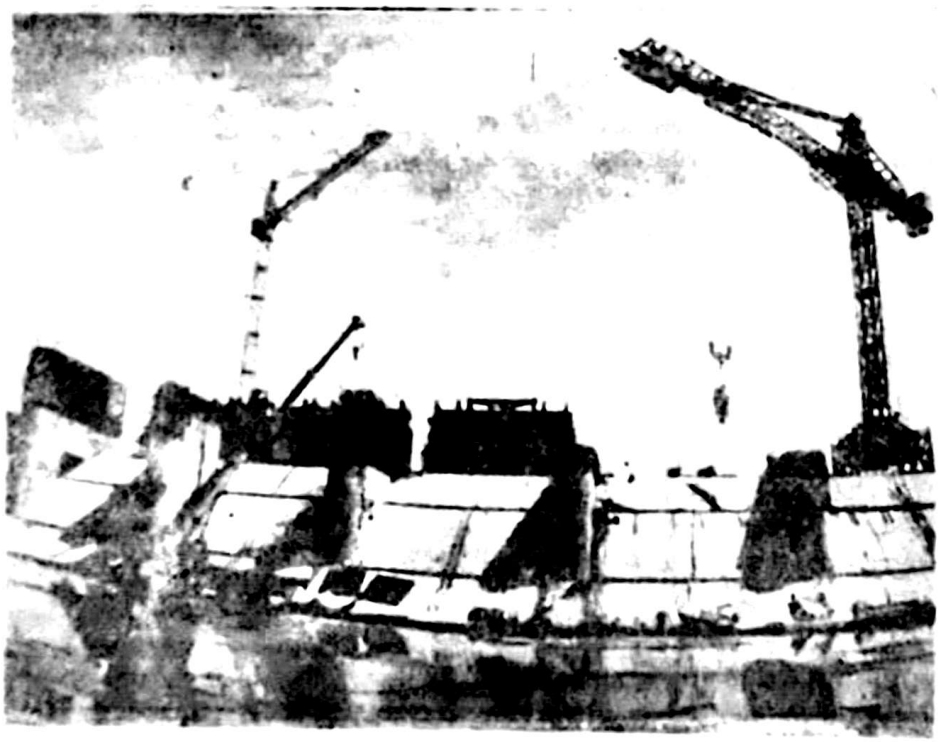
It is common knowledge that oil and gas exploration is a risky venture that requires a huge investment, high technologies and sound experiences. For a country like Vietnam, everything is completely new, and the field of operation is so large. International cooperation is indispensable. A number of foreign companies (Agip, Deminex, Bow Valley) had signed contracts with Vietnam and had actually carried out offshore drillings in some blocks granted on the continental shelf of southern Vietnam. Unfortunately, after their failure at 12 exploratory wells, these companies have unilaterally withdrawn with the annulment of all the contracts.

In such a difficult situation, the timely and effective help of the Soviet Union has turned the tide. By late 1981, an agreement on oil and gas cooperation was signed by the two governments. The Vietnam — USSR Oil and Gas Joint Venture has made some obvious differences during the past few years:

Detection of a gas pocket with a recoverable reserve of some 1.6 billion cubic metres in the Red River Delta which has been tapped since 1981 for electric generation at an annual capacity of 80 million kwh, and partially for local industrial usages.

Discovery of an oil deposit on the continental shelf of southern Vietnam which has started test production since June 1986. Commercial production has been planned. If things go as planned, Vietnam may become self-sufficient in minimum demand for oil by 1990.

Most important is the encouraging results in obtaining data for planning further oil exploitation. Some promising areas have been



The spillway at the Tri An hydro-power project.

Photo: THANH HAI

located. No less important is a technical and material foundation being laid with a complex of logistic bases, service facilities, oil rigs, training schools and a research institute, along with a series of specialized but related companies. The knowhow is successfully being transferred: the Vietnamese workers and technicians are now able to be on their own in erecting oil rigs and installing and operating equipment for offshore work.

Bracing up the vegetative fuel production in a well-planned manner

In Vietnam, vegetative fuel consists of fuelwood, bamboo, and agroforestry waste. The bulk of this resource is from natural and man-made forests. Scattered trees and plants make up part of the source.

In a farmland like Vietnam, vegetative fuel has a significant socio-economic importance. It is especially so in civil energy consumption. Sixty-five per cent of national primary energy consumption is shared by vegetative fuel, equivalent to 12.5 million tons of standard black coal (in 1980). Its reserve is estimated at about 49.5 to 55.5 million tons of coal equivalent. The ratio of exploitation to reserves is some 30 per cent.

Shortage of fuel for domestic use is critical in the rural areas. Would-be fodder like hay and straw, even grass and leaves, are thoroughly collected by humans and for human use in kitchen, affecting animal husbandry. At some places, people are obliged to destroy even national forest reserves just for fuelwood. In urban areas, petroleum rations are not enough, and a free market of fuelwood is stocked by illegal woodcutters from the countryside. Cityfolks have also devised tricks to drain electricity from the grid for domestic use, affecting the power supply for production.

Such a situation has forced the planners in Vietnam to regard the domestic fuel problem as equal in importance to the food problem. Vegetative fuel attracts their attention as an expedient variable. Soil and climate favour the growing of all kinds of fuelwood — short-term and long-term alike. Available labour in between crops could be mobilized. And tree-planting has been a habitual tradition, needing only a well-planned coordination to become productive.

Another aspect of solving the domestic fuel problem is efficiency of the wood-fired ovens in use. Traditional ovens have very low efficiencies (5 — 8 per cent), belching out a lot of smoke. They consume too much fuel and contaminate the environment. Projects have been carried out to devise new kinds of ovens that combine traditional experiences with foreign ideas. Some "improved" ovens have been marketed. Their efficiency has been proved to be from 12 to 15 per cent higher. Encouragement for this effort has been made, in the form of annual oven-design competitions, held by commercial groupings and local authorities.

Promoting research on and application of available new and renewable energies

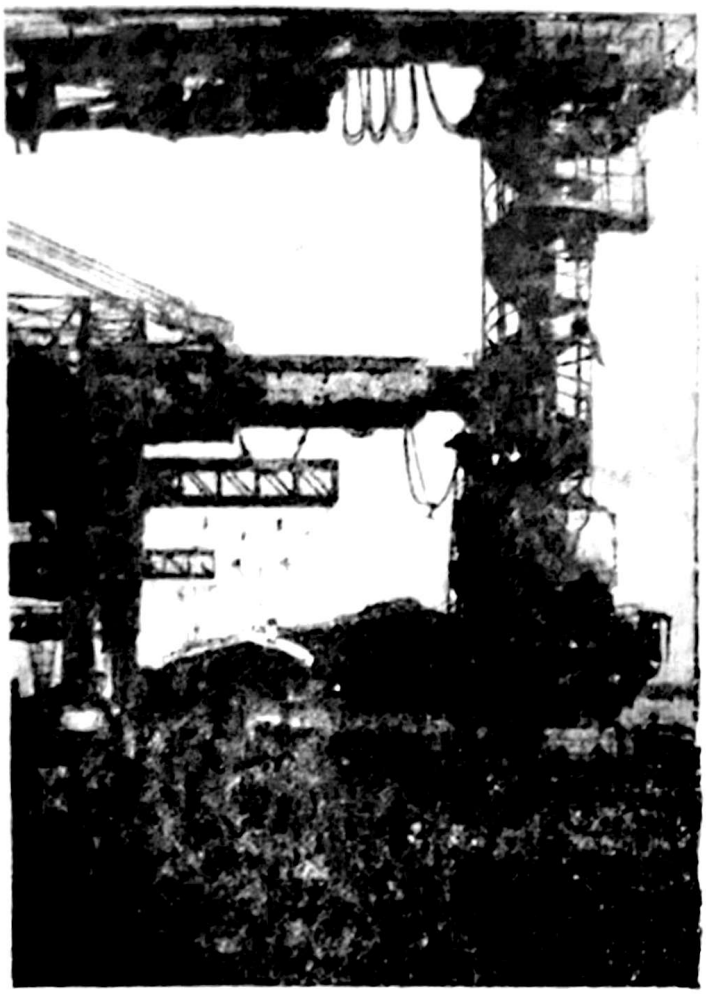
In Vietnam such activities relate to solar and wind energy, and biogas. Small and very small hydroelectric stations are also included in this field.

Individual researches were started very early. But their progress was slow and isolated. At present, researchers have been grouped to work in a well-organised national programme, financed by the Government. This programme is one of the most important thrusts in the overall national development plan. Work is proceeding in the direction of adapting foreign knowhow to the specific conditions of Vietnam.

The programme has tabled a model of rural family energy self-sufficiency (RFES) that combines solar and wind energy with methane. This model is built to cater for the energy needs of one rural household: heat for domestic use and power for family handicraft production — a very popular business in the Vietnamese countryside. This model has become rather well known in Vietnam under the name of BGM Model (abbreviations of Biogaz, *Gio* and *Mat troi*, the two latter words literally meaning Wind and Sun in Vietnamese). It fits in with the way of thinking of the Vietnamese farmers who have for so long been dreaming for a kitchen full of fuel and a motor for the family workshop. However, BGM Model still remains a model in practice. Although various modifications have been built for different localities, BGM Model is still too expensive, and to some extent, too complicated to be a self-help facility. Efforts are being made in two directions: lobbying for a priority pricing system in service of BGM Model popularization, and designing a cheaper model making use of locally available materials.

In recent years, a family econo-ecological pattern has been promoted in rural areas. It motivates and guides farmers to develop their family economy by gardening, fish-rearing and poultry raising or cattle husbandry, arranged into a symbiosis. The BGM Model has been tried to graft itself onto this symbiosis in some pilot localities, and has proved to be extremely beneficial. The rural family econo-ecological pattern is known in Vietnam as VAC Pattern (abbreviations of *Vuon*, *Ao* and *Chuong*, respectively Garden, Fishpond and Animal husbandry facilities in Vietnamese). BGM provides energy to boost the operation of VAC that in turn feeds back to BGM with its waste. The living environment is improved a great deal in this closed circuit. Products of the symbiosis constitute an impressive increase in family income. And investment is very soon repaid.

Geothermopower has also been studied and surveyed. It has been test-used for heat treatment in 2



Modern loading equipment at Quang Ninh coal mine

Photo: NGUYEN DAN

medical institutions, and for drying pharmaceutical materials, tea and tobacco.

Mini-hydroelectricity is included in this grouping because of its scattered and localized feature. In villages where electricity supply is not available, hydropotential is there, enough to become a good source of power supply for local consumption.

The very high feasibility of hydrostations of small and very small sizes is so attractive for energy planners: little investment, quick construction, locally available materials and manpower, simple technologies with home-manufactured equipment, and the omnipresence of waterways with hydropower potential. In the late 60's and early 70's, mini-hydrostations construction experienced a boom in northern Vietnam. Three hundred stations were built during that period. Their capacities ranged from a few kw to a peak of 3,500 kw. As a whole, these mini-stations produced some 90 million kwh of electricity a year, contributing more than 4 per cent to the national total electricity output of the time.

Results of this effort are given hereunder, with statistics taken since 1981:

200 mini-hydrostations have been restored or built anew, with average annual total production of some 43 million kwh. Plans have been approved for the construction of 70 other stations with total capacity (installed) of nearly 80,000 kw. Mini-hydropower planning has been done by almost all localities with available hydropower potential. Location of future stations has been determined in these plans. The most outstanding feature of the mini-hydrostations built is the fact that they are equipped with home-produced parts, designed and manufactured by local industries.

In conclusion

All the four priority directives in national energy development policy have exerted effective influence on the fulfilment of the task set for the period 1976 — 1985 in Vietnam, formulated as follows:

Restoration must go along with development. Active restoration is for firm development, aimed at meeting the immediate energy demand of a post-war economy, at the same time at developing energy production so that this enterprise will always be one step ahead of any industrialization activity. Energy development must rely mainly on the national resources, taking renewable energies as the most favourable source, particularly hydropower that can be tapped with hydrostations of various scales, combining hydroelectricity with thermoelectricity development, with focus being laid on the former. Oil and gas prospection must be urgently deployed, and active preparation for oil exploitation and processing must be carried out.

The choices of the post-war period have proved to be correct ones. The question is whether they are going to be validated in the coming years. A breakthrough in oil and gas exploitation could change the energy situation in Vietnam.

DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTRICITY IN VIETNAM

Before the August 1945 Revolution, Vietnam had an electricity production of only 52MW and 300 km of 31.5 — kV power transmission line. After the Revolution it went through 30 years of war in which electricity production was little developed. Only after peace was restored and the country reunified in 1975, has the production of electrical energy expanded powerfully with the assistance of the Soviet Union and other fraternal countries (Table 1).

By the end of 1986, total generating capacity was 1,728MW. Thermopower accounted for 948 MW, hydropower, 295MW, and diesel generators and gas turbines 485MW. In 1986, electricity output was 5,524 GWh.

The power grid has also been developed. There are now two grids: one in the North and one in the South with a total length of 822 km of 220 KV lines, 2,318 km of 110-66 KV lines and 628 km of 15 KV line (Table 2).

At present the Soviet Union and other socialist countries are helping Vietnam to draw up a general programme for the development of electricity up to 1990 and 1995. All 60 cities and provincial capitals of Vietnam are now supplied with electricity. Of them 50 receive electricity from both grids.

The major projects under construction or nearing completion are the hydropower plant at Hoa Binh (1,920MW), the hydropower plant at Tri An (420 MW), the thermopower plant at Pha Lai (440 MW) and the thermopower plant at Da Nang (120 MW) (Table 3).

Development of electricity in Vietnam (1975 – 1990) *(Table 1)*

		Unit	1975	1980	1985	1990
1	Capacity of generators	MW	1,303	1,474	1,696	2,950
	Thermopower	–	616	667	914	1,030
	Hydropower	–	282	286	293	1,440
	Diesel generator and gas turbine	–	405	521	489	480
2	Capacity of transformers	MVA	2,789	3,313	5,250	9,830
	220 kv	–	168	168	418	1,730
	110 – 66 kv	–	716	955	2,050	3,280
	15 – 6 kv	–	1,913	2,190	2,782	4,820
3	Power line	km	15.390	24,440	33.340	42.560
	High voltage : 220, 110, 66 kv	–	1.504	2,062	2,540	4,660
	Middle voltage: 35 – 6kv	–	8.982	12,134	14.560	17.400
	Low voltage : 0,4 – 0,2 kv	–	4.904	10,244	16,240	20.500
4	Electricity output	GWh	2,980	3,557	5,060	10,500
	Thermopower	–	1,773	1,742	3.022	5,150
	Hydropower	–	856	1,485	1,472	5,030
	Diesel + Turbine	–	351	330	566	320
5	Consumption per capita per year	kwh	54	66	80	150

Power grids in Vietnam in 1986 (Table 2)

Region	Generating capacity	Power line		Transformer capacity		Electricity output (GWh)
		220 kv	110-66 kv	220 kv	110-66 kv	
North	919	372	1,497.4	250	819	3,237
South	696	450	820.5	184	633	2,025

FUEL – A PRESSING PROBLEM

Since fire was discovered some 500,000 years ago, cooked food has become a fact of life and food and fuel have become intimately connected. In Vietnam, the problem is felt all the more acutely since the taking of hot meals is a general habit and large amounts of wood are still used for winter heating in the northern provinces. Since the government is not yet in a position to provide sufficient amounts of fuel for these purposes, people have to fend for themselves resulting in serious deforestation.

As estimated by the Forestry Service in Nghe Tinh province, south of Hanoi, annual per capita demand for firewood in the province is 378 kilos in the lowlands, 420 kilos in the uplands and 1,467 kilos in the highlands. The population, over 3 million, thus needs about 1.6 million tonnes of firewood every year. That would mean, if supply did not come from other sources, the annual devastation of 60,000 hectares of forest.

According to recent computations, domestic fuel consumption accounts for more than two-thirds of the total amount of energy consumed in the whole country. By the year 2000, despite a sharp increase in the output of coal, oil and electricity, over 40% of the energy produced will still be used for cooking and heating.

The energy problem, including the supply of fuels for home use, is therefore a major concern in Vietnam as in other countries, particularly developing countries, where an energy strategy has taken shape, with emphasis on:

— Greater independence in energy supply, which means intensive exploitation of local sources.

— Diversification of sources, which means the use of alternative sources to avoid too much dependence on traditional ones.

— Restriction of imports.

— Economy and higher efficiency in fuel use.

These points naturally apply also to domestic fuels. Each region, each unit must work out a plan, on the basis of its own resources and demands, and resolve this problem in a flexible and effective manner.

In our view, fuel planning in Vietnam, where coal, kerosene, natural gas, electricity and wood constitute the main fuels for urban and other non-agricultural population centres, must take into consideration the following points:

First, present coal consumption, about 1 million tonnes a year, cannot be exceeded because priority must be given to industry. For this reason low-grade coal and other locally available combustibles, like peat, should be made the most of.

The use of kerosene should be limited too, because Vietnam will not be self-sufficient in oil for another decade. Our small deposits of natural gas should be reserved for local use.

What about electricity? Will there be enough of it for extensive domestic use after the completion of the hydro-electric stations at Hoa Binh and Tri An? No answer can be given without carefully considering power consumption, output, transmission capacity, investment, and related problems. What is clear is that should domestic consumption of electricity be allowed to increase sharply, great investment would be needed to improve the low-voltage lines in the cities, which are already overloaded. Moreover, hydropower stations will operate at only one-fourth of capacity in the dry season. So electricity for home consumption during that period will come mainly from thermal power stations. There is also the low efficiency of electric heating to consider: only 12% as compared with 35% for kerosene and 32 — 34% for coal.

So the main course for Vietnam, a tropical country rich in renewable energy sources, is to grow trees for firewood, to use all agro-forest waste, and to produce biogas from manure and vegetal matter.

Trees for firewood should be of the kinds that give much heat, grow fast, and live over a long time. They should be planted in great numbers around urban areas to ensure a steady supply of wood and charcoal, and also to improve the environment. In the uplands and highlands, they can be planted on a much larger scale, in whole forests, or alongside other crops. In fact, pilot projects have been carried out successfully in different parts of the country. The point now is to multiply these models on a national scale.

Agro-forest waste constitutes another major source. In Ben Tre province, for instance, good solid fuel is made from ground coconut shells and fiber, which can produce up to 4,000 kilo-calories per kilo.

Biogas, another promising source, is produced more and more abundantly in Ho Chi Minh City, in the provinces of Bien Hoa and Can Tho, and by army units.

The tapping of other sources — solar, tidal, geothermal, etc., — is being undertaken by government departments and army units.

An equally important measure is the improvement of stove design. Most of the types in general use now are wasteful, with heating efficiency averaging only 10%. Better-designed ones could be up to 30% effective.

NGUYEN THUONG

For Socio-Economic Renovation:

THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY IN A PERIOD OF RENOVATION

Father PHAN KHAC TU
Deputy Secretary General of the Solidarity Committee of Patriotic Vietnamese Catholics

Editor's Note — *Presented by the Vietnam Fatherland Front as a candidate for Ho Chi Minh City in the election to the Eighth National Assembly, Father Phan Khac Tu was interviewed by the journal* The Vietnamese Catholic, *organ of the Solidarity Committee of Patriotic Vietnamese Catholics.*
Below are his views.

Through contacts with my constituents and the mass media I realize that there is a general demand for the Eighth National Assembly to fully perform its role and function as the highest organ of State power. This will be the yardstick of the country's determination for renovation, as put forward by the Sixth Party Congress, and also the yardstick of the people's exercise of their right to mastery in our regime. The policy of renovation set forth by the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam demands from the Eighth National Assembly and from each deputy a new work style.

In my view, at its very first session the Eighth National Assembly should effectively exercise the power entrusted to it by the Party and the Constitution. For instance, by showing its confidence or non-confidence in the Council of Ministers or in any given minister. Shouldn't there be a secret voting, say each year, for it to show its confidence or non-confidence of the entire Council of Ministers or in any given member of the Council, after hearing a report and holding a debate on the Council's performance? The Assembly's expression of its confidence must be a very great encouragement for those ministers who have fulfilled their duties, conversely, its non-confidence in and the timely replacement of incompetent ministers will protect the interests of the country. Right from the start, the Eighth National Assembly should see to it that its opinion is respected, and decide what it should do if it is not. In my view, this is a struggle for renovation.

In this struggle for renovation by the National Assembly, the press and the mass media in general can make a very great contribution. A deputy to the National Assembly is a representative of the people, and therefore must be aware of their aspirations, views and requirements — those of the working people in the first place — not only through direct contact with his constituents but also through the mass media. Should the latter faithfully reflect what the people think, criticize and request, the deputies will enjoy great support in the exercise of their function. On the other hand, if the mass media fully report on the Assembly's sessions, the people will be able to control the representative character of this highest organ of State power.

With regard to Catholic deputies in particular, the journals *The Vietnamese Catholic* and *Catholicism and the Nation* should effectively support their efforts in the National Assembly in matters relating to religion.

Should I be elected as a Catholic representative, I would like to introduce before the National Assembly a bill on religious activities. The fact is that in some places the main principles of freedom of belief as stated in the Constitution and reaffirmed in Resolution 297 of the Council of Ministers issued in November 1977 have not been adequately implemented. There should be a more comprehensive law on religious activities.

Lastly, I am confident that the journal *The Vietnamese Catholic*, the Solidarity Committee of Patriotic Vietnamese Catholics, and the Fatherland Front will actively support me in my effort to highlight the Party's policy on religion and satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the Catholics. ●

DEVELOPMENT...

(Continued from page 22)

Major power plants in Vietnam (Table 3)

	Capacity (MW)	Year of construction	Year of commissioning of turbine 1
Thermopower			
Uong Bi	153	1961	1963
Ninh Binh	100	1970	1974
Thu Duc	165	1964	1966
Pha Lai	440	1979	1983
Hydropower			
Da Nhim	160	1960	1964
Thac Ba	108	1965	1971
Tri An	420	1982	1987
Hoa Binh	1920	1979	1988

NGUYEN TAN DUONG
Department of Science and Technique, Ministry of Energy

For a Brisk Foreign Trade

ACTIVITIES OF THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Set up on 27 April 1963, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam has recently commemorated its 24 th birth anniversary.

At present, CCI has embarked upon a new period of multiple activities involving a broad network of more than 400 member organizations comprising companies, enterprises, and institutions engaged in foreign trade, industry, agriculture, finance, banking, communications and transport, science and technique in the whole country. The goal of CCI according to its new Rules is to help develop economic and commercial relations and scientific and technical cooperation between Vietnam and foreign countries. To achieve this goal, it has unceasingly striven to expand its manifold activities both at home and abroad.

Every year, it has been organizing trips to Vietnam for nearly 600 foreign delegations comprising about 1,400 people active in international economy and trade coming to Vietnam to promote trade and economic, scientific and technical cooperation with related Vietnamese organizations. Besides traders, there have been representatives of foreign Chambers of Commerce, production and business enterprises, organizations for economic research, scientific and technical cooperation. They have come to survey the market, establish business relations with Vietnamese partners, discuss new fields of cooperation and trade. CCI has also helped organize business trips to various countries for its member organizations.

As a hub of transactions, CCI has been exchanging correspondence with more than one thousand companies and organizations throughout the world to introduce them to Vietnamese foreign-trade organizations and lines of products, for both import and export, and supply them with information and guidance about the Vietnamese market. It has also introduced its members to the requirements and possibilities of foreign trade partners.

In recent years, CCI has increasingly participated in activities of the Chambers of Commerce of fraternal socialist countries in the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). These activities have contributed to boosting relations of trade and economic cooperation between CCI members and their counterparts in the fraternal countries, thus contributing to the implementation of the comprehensive programme of economic integration between the CMEA countries. CCI has also signed many agreements and memoranda on cooperation with Chambers of Commerce and trading associations in many countries in various areas in the world. Of late, to further promote relations with major clients, it has, together with related organizations at home, set up cooperation committees and coordination groups involving a number of foreign organizations and companies.

To promote technical cooperation between Vietnam and foreign countries, CCI has organized symposiums and seminars for Vietnamese and foreign technicians to exchange experience on technical problems arising in the production and use of certain products.

Parallel with the development of foreign trade relations, CCI has also organized such related activities as fairs, exhibitions, services of information, legal counsel, arbitration, registration of inventions and trade-marks. Every year, it participates in about 15 international fairs and organises exhibitions of Vietnamese export commodities abroad and of foreign products in Vietnam.

CCI publishes a quarterly review *(Vietnam Foreign Trade)* and has compiled guide-books for trade with Vietnam and a nomenclature of Vietnamese export business units. The provision of legal counsel and of common documents of international commerce, and such services as arbitration, registration of inventions and trade-marks... have contributed to making the import-export practice of CCI member organizations conform to the customs and regulations of international trade.

By its multiform activities at home and abroad, CCI is playing an increasingly active role in the development of economic and commercial relations and of scientific and technical cooperation between Vietnam and foreign countries, thus contributing to the fulfilment of the three major economic programmes of the country in 1987 and the years to come.

NGUYEN MINH CHI

For Socio-Economic Renovation:

STABLE SUPPLY OF RAW MATERIALS FOR THE PRODUCTION OF EXPORT GOODS

So far we have invested a fair amount of capital and equipment in agriculture, forestry and fishery to build stable sources of raw materials for the production of consumer and export goods. As a result, a number of special-crop zones have come into being, producing tea, sugar-cane, raw materials for paper pulp, and also peanuts, coffee, rubber, vegetables and fruits. However, this work has proceeded rather slowly and has not supplied enough raw materials to the processing industries. For instance: it was planned in 1961 to grow sugar-cane on 2,000 ha in Phu Xuyen and Thuong Tin districts (Ha Son Binh province) for supply to the Van Diem sugar refinery, but the most we could do was 1,500 ha, reduced in 1986 to only 1,200 ha. The mill has been working at only one-third of capacity.

Regarding tea, potentials are not lacking but our policy of procurement and investment has been inadequate. State farms only supply half of the tea to be processed, 30% in some places, and the remainder has had to be bought from cooperatives and private growers.

As regards vegetables and fruits for supply to canning factories the flow is irregular and insufficient. For instance, Lap Thach district (Vinh Phu province) can grow 2,000 ha of pineapple but so far only 500 — 600 ha have been planted.

The inadequate supply of raw materials has badly affected production and trading in this branch of activity, in the State sector, and indeed in the whole economy.

The causes of this situation, in our opinion, are basically the following:

First, *there is no long-term plan to develop crop zones specialized in producing such raw materials.*

Development projects undertaken by various branches and in various localities have not taken into account the all-round efficiency of the economy. In some cases, while a factory under a certain department is not being used to full capacity, another is built by the locality where it is situated. In other cases, a plant is built with too large capacity and then the State is asked to create a special zone producing raw materials for it. Or a mill has to procure raw materials at high costs from distant sources. Or too many projects are undertaken in the same period with the result that investments are spread thin, projects take too long to be completed, and technologies are outdated. Also due to the lack of a long-term plan the import of equipment from fraternal socialist countries for processing-mills is badly co-ordinated.

Second, there is *a lack of appropriate investment.* Investment mainly goes to the State sector; it is moreover ill-coordinated and scattered. Investment through local authorities to co-operatives producing raw materials is ineffective. Worse still, it is often diverted to other purposes. The plans of processing factories often do not fit in with those of local State farms and cooperatives which supply them with raw materials.

Third, *policies on prices and on the supply of materials and equipment fail to encourage the producers of raw materials.* Every producer wants to stabilize and expand his production. But if in buying equipment and selling raw materials, he suffers losses due to inadequate pricing, he cannot continue producing. The failure of producers of raw materials to invest in depth shows that the present policy on prices is inadequate and outdated.

One of the requirements of large-scale socialist production is that all links in the chain of production must be organically related. Therefore, the producer of raw materials, the manufacturer, and the distributor play an equally important role. *At present, the fundamental problem is to change our economic policies* in such a way as to encourage all parties to raise productivity, product quality and economic efficiency. To meet these requirements, we should enforce well-coordinated measures. First of all, a long-term plan to develop specialized zones producing raw materials should be drawn up. This plan is part of the three major economic programmes of the Party and the State, the core of which is to "rearrange the structure of production and re-adjust the structure of investment so as to make the most of our existing potentials in manpower, land and material-

(Continued on page 28)

A CATHOLIC VILLAGE FIGHTS POVERTY

From the guest house of the Hong Minh agricultural cooperative, which stands on a hill top, we could look out on tea-clad hills in the north, linked to a vast expanse of ricefields by a newly-built motor road. Red-painted tractors were transporting newly-harvested ground-nuts to the cooperative. In late autumn the sky was cloudy, but the room was brightly lit by electricity supplied by a 30-kw generator (used mainly to operate a small rice mill.)

Duong, the co-op manager, treated us to cups of fragrant tea. He said: "This is Hong Minh tea. A few years ago when I urged people to grow tea on the hill slopes nobody believed that we could ever be successful. All argued that the soil here was fit only for wild plants to grow. Now our tea has earned a good reputation for flavour in the province."

Hong Minh is a catholic parish which is part of Yen Thanh commune, Nghe Tinh province. Duong was born into a Catholic family. He has devoted his energies to the development of his cooperative for some decades now. As a communist, he has been waging a long fight against famine and poverty. In this difficult struggle, he has had to work hard to make people believe in the superiority of the new regime and to beat the arguments of people who hide their retrograde views under the cloak of religion... For dozens of years, together with other members of the local Party cell and the co-op managing board, he has fought hard against both nature and man's backward habits in order to take Hong Minh forward.

Before 1980, anybody who visited the region was not favourably impressed. Hong Minh had vast lands, both flat and hilly. But rice plants died from either drought or flood. The 3,500 inhabitants relied mainly on 36 hectares of wet ricefields giving yields not surpassing 1.2 tonnes per hectare per year. Even in years of good harvest the monthly rice ration per head of population did not exceed 5 kilograms. The inhabitants depended heavily on what they got from the forest: firewood, charcoal and some timber felled in contravention of the law. The Yen Thanh Party committee and the Hong Minh Party committee and the Mong Minh Party cell held long discussion to find ways to strengthen the cooperative but failed to solve the key problem-food. The cooperative could not feed the people. It was not until 1980, when the cooperative was reorganized, that an appropriate formula for agricultural production was found. For too long the Yen Thanh people had wrongly adopted the monoculture of rice. This had led them into a blind alley.

Meanwhile, heated discussions were held in the Party Committee. Several formulas for the combination of agriculture and forestry were suggested but some people adamantly said: "Since time immemorial our ancestors had got from these hills only firewood. Any planted food crops would soon be smothered by wild vegetation." Eventually the agricultural service and the district authorities helped people from Hong Minh to visit many similar regions within and without the province. Upon their return, they all said: "We alone are responsible for the poor yields of our soil."

Changes began at Hong Minh. The higher authorities gave it fund for irrigation projects and sent technical cadre to give it guidance in growing ground-nuts as a summer-autumn crop. The mass movement gained momentum. The most important problem was eventually solved: water. The people erected dams and built small water reservoirs and dug channels to bring water to the fields, which became two-crop ricefields. From 36 hectares the rice area in Hong Minh rose to 75 hectares. Now it is 235 hectares. Rice yields rose from 1.2 tonnes/ha to 4.5 tonnes/ha per crop. As a stable supply of water was ensured the cooperative replaced long-growth rice strains with short-term ones, which not only gave higher yields but could also be grown in summer-autumn. For the first time, the people in hilly Yen Thanh were able to grow three successive rice crops a year, all giving high yields, plus a subsidiary crop, by practising intensive culture.

However, the forte of Hong Minh remains its forested hills. The rice it grows can only cover its people's needs. It must exploit its forests if it is to have commercial products to sell for cash. An "agriculture-forestry coordination" program was discussed at the co-op congress. As

a result of the confidence generated by the successful irrigation scheme, and the subsequent abundant production of rice and subsidiary crops, this time, when discussing the way to exploit the forests and hills, people eagerly contributed ideas. The target set was to clear 1,500 hectares of forest lands. They were divided into several categories: timber to protect, land to afforest, and plots to allot to the co-op members as "forest gardens". This program was supported by the district and provincial authorities, the provincial sedentarization committee and particularly by the agricultural service. Hong Minh was given technical guidance and financial assistance by the province. But its biggest capital came from the people. While formerly, hills and forests had been regarded as a "godsend" to be exploited as one saw fit, now they were tended and protected by all. Only a few years later Hong Minh had 134 hectares of new timber forests. Within five years a new face had been put on the locality: isolated houses had been gathered into hamlets at the foot of the hills, surrounded by "forest gardens". Old forests were protected; and new ones planted under a plan; hill slopes which used to be overgrown with wild vegetation, and to show signs of lateritization were now planted with tea and groundnuts. A forest exploitation team had been formed, and within five years, had planted 14 hectares of eucalyptus and 120 hectares of *mét*, totalling 35,000 trees. On hills with gentle slopes and thick topsoil, 90 hectares were planted with ground-nuts and 35 hectares with tea. At present they yield 100 tonnes of ground-nuts yearly. Of the 35 hectares of tea, 25 hectares have yielded returns. Hong Minh tea is reputed for its high quality.

What is surprising in this hilly region, is the annual catch of fish, and not only ricefield fish. Eleven small reservoirs have been built through the joint efforts of the State and the people. Totalling 6.8 million cubic metres of water, they irrigate 325 hectares of ricefields and are also used to rear fish and ducks. The people have also been raising buffaloes, goats and even deer. At present, the plains, hills, forests and reservoirs of Hong Minh all yield revenues.

• • •

By combining agriculture, forestry and fishery, Hong Minh which used to be one of the poorest villages in Yen Thanh commune, now owns two big tractors, a lorry, an animal feed processing machine, a rice husking machine, an electric generator, a pump of 1,000 cubic metres/hour capacity, not to mention 500 ox-carts. Added to this are such public-interest works as a school, a medical station, a cultural house, storehouses, shops and a dozen kilometres of motor roads.

On the new road linking Hong Minh to the National Highways 1 and 7, there was busy traffic of vehicles transporting goods to and from the commune.

The poor catholic village of only a few years ago is growing ever richer thanks to the diligent labour and the spirit of collective mastery of its inhabitants.

PHAM DAO

STABLE SUPPLY ...

(Continued from page 26)

technical bases" (Resolution of the Sixth Party Congress).

Being a tropical country, Vietnam can raise many vegetal and animal species. We should carefully decide which crops and animals have the greatest bearing on the people's life (for home consumption) or best satisfy the demands of world markets (for export). Then an order of priority and the proper scopes of development should be determined in accordance with our possibilities and prospects, with a view to a quick turnover. In other words, economic efficiency must be taken into account. Even in our import of equipment we should keep an eye on economic efficiency and pay great attention to the eventual quality of product. In the world today, science and technique is an essential component of the strategy of economic development. While being at present content with exporting raw materials and semi-processed goods, in future we should export highly-processed products.

In the present circumstances, our investment should go to trusts, unions of enterprises, and individual enterprises. They manage these funds and use them to develop special-crop zones through intensive farming. Part of these funds may be managed by the local authorities. The funds are used to pay for essential equipment and materials, technical services, food and even current expenditures. The enterprises are responsible to the State for the effective use of investment, fast recovery of funds and turnout of products.

Meanwhile, we should mobilize all other sources of capital, encourage enterprises, co-operatives and individuals to contribute to the financing of zones of intensive farming producing raw materials.

NGUYEN DINH TON

FAMILY PLANNING IN QUANG NAM — DA NANG

Quang Nam — Da Nang is one of the five provinces and municipalities in the country — the others are Thai Binh, Hanoi, Haiphong and Ho Chi Minh City — to have reduced the demographic growth rate to about 1.7%.

A newly-liberated province with no particularly favourable conditions for family planning, it has learnt to make good use of the experience gathered in the whole country and summed up in these four points: decisive role of the Party, government and mass organizations; importance attached to propaganda and education of the masses; good organization of medical services; appropriate policy of encouragement.

In addition, Quang Nam — Da Nang has gained some experience of its own. It took timely advantage of the revolutionary upsurge following liberation and started the family planning movement at a time when the long war of resistance had just ended and the proportion of couples of child-bearing age was still relatively low.

In the first years, family planning was mostly practised by couples with a numerous progeny, but now it involves mainly young couples with only 1-2 children. The aim: the number of couples practising birth control each year should be greater than that of children born the previous year.

Beside the usual extensive forms of propaganda and education, the mass organizations within the Vietnam Fatherland Front, chiefly the Women's Union, are active at the grassroots. After successfully practising birth control, many people have become zealous propagandists. Urging boys and girls to marry late is most effective in bringing down the rate of demographic growth. Propaganda for family planning is carried out not only among women but in all sections of the people, particularly among men and in schools. Quang Nam — Da Nang sets great store by direct and continued propaganda at the grassroots, which makes the masses alive to the importance of family planning.

The province has coordinated family planning with the redistribution of the population, particularly by sending eligible young people to do military or labour service so as to keep actual population growth in any given area below the normal demographic growth rate. This has encouraged boys and girls to marry late and has kept the proportion of couples of child-bearing age lower than that of women of that age. This achievement was commended by the UNFPA (the United Nations Fund for Population Activities) mission visiting the province.

One cannot successfully encourage family planning (which consists mainly in urging each couple to have only two children at most) if the parents are not assured that their children will receive good care for their physical and intellectual development. Therefore, while developing technical facilities for birth control the province has taken appropriate measures to expand health services for expectant mothers and infants. Besides, good child care also contributes an important part to the development of family planning. Gynecological care is combined with the prevention of accidents in childbirth and the application of methods of birth control. Contraceptive measures are taken for both husbands and wives. Women are urged to go for a check-up at the first sign of absence of menstruation. Curettage is not to be regarded as a contraceptive method but one to be applied when birth control fails. Contraceptive services are available at the grassroots.

Statistical services operate efficiently. The province has completed its demographic survey and has established population growth projects for each district, each town, for the capital and for the whole province for different periods up to the year 2 000.

HOANG THAO

VIETNAM — SOVIET COOPERATION IN CINEMATOGRAPHY

Ever since its founding, Vietnamese cinematography has received a great, many-sided and effective assistance from Soviet cinematography. In early 1954, Soviet documentary-makers like Roman Carmen, Esurin and Mokhin came to Vietnam, and shot valuable films *Vietnam on the Road to Victory*, *The National Day of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam 1954*. Roman Carmen, Esurin and Mokhin were also the first Soviet citizens to set foot in this country. Through this assistance and cooperation, Vietnamese cineasts learnt how to make documentaries, following this a first batch of managers for documentaries appeared. Later on, many Soviet cineasts came to Vietnam, and shot other films.

In 1959, Vietnamese cinematography entered a new stage requiring the birth of many kinds of feature-films, animated cartoons and the establishment of a school of cinematography. The Soviet Union sent an expert in cinematography, outstanding Artist Azida Ibraghimov, to train the first cadres for Vietnamese cinematography. Now, some of these students have become people's artists or excellent artists, others are holding senior posts in cinematography establishments. Besides, the Soviet Union has helped Vietnam in the training of cinematography cadres-graduates and post-graduates, in Soviet colleges of cinematography. This contingent is at present the main force of Vietnamese cinematography.

In the past and at present, Soviet films have taken pride of place on the Vietnamese screen, in both number and quality. The great sacrifices and heroism of the Soviet armymen and people in their great

patriotic war, shown on the screen, has stimulated our armymen and people in our two resistance wars against French and US aggressions. The images of Soviet officers and soldiers have left fine and lasting impressions among many generations of Vietnamese viewers. Today, in socialist construction, Soviet cinematography still sets an example of the Soviet people's qualities and way of life which the Vietnamese viewers admire and love.

The Soviet Union has also extended to Vietnam a considerable aid in cinematographic equipment, machinery and technique, particularly for film projection. A fine manifestation is the building in Moscow of a movie-house named Hanoi and the assistance the Soviet Union will give Vietnam in the building in Hanoi of a movie-house named Moscow.

For its part, over the past 30 years, Vietnamese cinematography has given facilities to many Soviet cineasts to come to Vietnam and shoot films of world repute. Besides artists Roman Carmen, Esurin, Mokhin, there are woman artist Vermi Seva with the film *Your Name is Ho Chi Minh*, Constantin Simonov with the film *The Sufferings Which Are not Particular to Anybody* and other artists with other films.

Vietnam has regularly attended with a full sense of responsibility the International Film Festivals in Moscow, the Festivals of Asian, African and Latin American films in Tashkent.

At the first Moscow Festival (1959), the Vietnamese documentary *Water Has Come to Bac Hung Hai* was awarded a gold medal. Afterwards, the films *At the Crest of the Waves, Cu Chi Guerillas, The Path Forward, The Vinh Linh Steel Fortress, The Hunters on Dac Sao Mount, The New Address...* won gold medals in subsequent film festivals. The feature-film *The Waste Land* received a gold medal at the 12th Moscow Film Festival (1981), and Actress Tra Giang in the film *The 17th Parallel — Day and Night* was awarded a prize for best acting at the Eighth Moscow Film Festival (1973).

Vietnamese Film Weeks are regularly organized every year in the Soviet Union, and Soviet Film Weeks, in Vietnam; this has become a fine tradition of cultural life for the two Vietnamese and Soviet peoples.

In recent years, the co-operation has been brought a step further. A new feature is cooperation in film-making. The documentary *The Star of Brotherhood*, the scientific film *Prevention of Metal Corrosion*, the feature film *Coordinates of Death...* have opened the way for joint film-making between Vietnam and the fraternal countries.

Joint efforts are being pushed up in various respects. The recently signed cooperation plan for 1987 between Vietnamese and Soviet cinematographies bears testimony to this fine relationship.

Over the past thirty years, Vietnamese cinematography has enjoyed great assistance from Soviet cinematography, and made an effective use of it. For Vietnamese cinematography, Soviet cinematography is a guide exerting a great and deep impact on its development. This has resulted in a lasting cooperation and close relationship between cinematographic workers of the two countries.

NGUYEN THU
Head of the Department of Cinematography.

WELCOME TO VIETNAM

NGUYEN QUYEN SINH
Head,
General Department of Tourism

Vietnam is located in the central part of Southeast Asia and serves as a bridge linking the continent to the archipelagoes in the East Sea. It lies on the international sea lanes connecting the Indian Ocean to the Northern Pacific, and the Indochinese Peninsula to Oceania.

Vietnam has an area of over 330,000 square kilometres, threefourths of which is mountainous and forested. Many places in the country are ideal for tourist activities.

You can visit Vietnam any time of the year. Average temperatures vary between 22 and 28°C. Being situated in the tropics the country has plenty of sunshine all the year round.

Foreign tourists are fascinated by our many beaches and small bays dotted with little islands, along our 3,260-km sea-coast. In the book "Wonders of the World" published in Paris in 1950, Vietnam's Ha Long Bay and Nguyen royal buildings (palaces, mausoleums, temples...) in Hue are listed. Beautiful landscapes characterize our mountain resorts at Tam Dao, Sapa, Da lat and other places.

Although Vietnam Tourism was founded as early as 1960 the prolonged state of war has prevented us from expanding our tourist industry. The political report read at the December 1986 CPV Congress says: "We must rapidly turn our favourable conditions to account and expand tourism through domestic investment and international cooperation". This lays a firm basis for the expansion of Vietnam Tourism in the new stage.

By now Vietnam Tourism has established relations with more than 70 tourist agencies all over the world. Recently agreements have been signed between Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea in order to organize tours involving the three countries in response to the wishes of European tourists. Recently the first groups of tourists organized by the West German Hansa Tourist Company have flown from Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam) to Phnom Penh (Kampuchea).

You can choose any one of the 16 programmes of visits in Vietnam available at international tourist companies. Along the length of our country there are 10 major tourist centres: Hanoi, Ha Long, Hai Phong, Hue, Da Nang, Nha Trang, Vung Tau — Con Dao, Can Tho, Ho Chi Minh City.

Over the last few years, Vietnam Tourism has arranged tours for many visitors' groups from the USSR, Poland, the GDR, Czechoslovakia, France, the USA, Denmark, Sweden, Italy, the FRG, etc. We are making the necessary preparations to receive ever more tourists and provide them with ever better services.

Visa formalities for tourists have been simplified. Overseas Vietnamese now have very favourable conditions to visit their native country.

For further information, please inquire at tourist agencies in your country or write to.

VIETNAM TOURISM
54 Nguyen Du Street, Hanoi
Tel. 55983 — 54674
Telex: 4269 Tourism VT

Portrait of an Artiste

First Vietnamese Violinist of International Standard

Ta Bon is well known to music lovers at home through recitals, concerts and radio and television programmes. He unfailingly captivates his audiences by perfect technique, intelligent interpretation and original style.

Ta Bon was born in 1942, in the town of Nam Dinh, 100 km south of Hanoi. He had his first violin lessons at the age of seven, and his first teacher was his own father, violinist and pianist Ta Phuoc who, together with To Vu, was later to compose *Nong Thon Doi Moi* (The New Countryside) — the first symphonic work in Vietnam.

Ta Bon entered a secondary music school in 1955. Three years later, in 1958 with tutorial help from Soviet Professor P. Makarenko he took part in the Enesco violin competition in Bucharest, Romania. He got the second round and was given an honours certificate. A member of the jury, Soviet violinist David Oistrakh, had him admitted to the Tchaikovski Conservatoire in Moscow. As he was only 16, one year short of admission age, Ta Bon went through one year of preparatory study.

Gifted, hard working and benefiting from the personal guidance of Professor Byelenski, Ta Bon made fast progress. His teachers and friends agreed that he played with deep feeling, and they predicted for him a brilliant future. Ta Bon did not fail them: in 1962, he won a silver medal at the Youth Festival in Helsinki, Finland.

Ta Bon graduated from the conservatoire in 1964. He took part in the valedictory concert given in the Great Hall, playing several preludes by Dimitri Shostakovich. Speakins about his performance, Soviet violinist Goldstein said: "Ta Bon has acquired excellent knowledge of music. He has exceptional gifts and plays with fervour, feeling and virtuosity."

Ta Bon returned to the conservatoire in 1965 for graduate studies until 1968. To many critics, he was the first Vietnamese violinist to attain international standard. Ta Bon's valedictory recital in 1968 included works by Beethoven, Sergei Prokofiev, Debussy and Dephal.

Writing about it in *Izvestia*, Professor Sokolovski said: "Ta Bon's technique was superb. His strokes showed power and skill and were tone-perfect. He deeply felt what he was playing."

Back at home Ta Bon joined the teaching staff at the Vietnam Music School, now the Hanoi Conservatoire. He has also performed in many parts of the country and has toured Finland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Cuba and Kampuchea, interpreting works by the great masters.

Ta Bon believes that the greatest challenge to an artiste, whether he is playing national or foreign music, is to find a way to express his personal feelings and the soul of his people. Speaking of Dang Thai Son and Ton Nu Nguyet Minh, two Vietnamese pianists who have won great honours at international competitions, Ta Bon said: "It may be said that Dang Thai Son has introduced the Vietnamese soul into Chopin's works, and that's what has brought him success."

On Vietnamese music he said: "Vietnamese have natural gifts for music, thanks to their tone-rich language, beautiful land and age-old culture. I can say that violin and cello students at the Hanoi Conservatoire are in no way inferior to those in developed countries. It's a pity that we're so poor materially, and that music audiences, particularly for Western classical music, which was introduced into Vietnam barely half a century ago, are rather restricted. Even so, I believe that we'll make fast progress."

Ta Bon is a hard worker and in the prime of his career. His musical activity, especially in teaching, has won due recognition at home and abroad. He was made a professor in 1981 and is now deputy director of the Hanoi Conservatoire. He sat on the jury at Tchaikovski competitions held in the Soviet Union in 1978, 1982 and 1986, and at Bach competitions held in the German Democratic Repubic in 1980 and 1984.

DUC THANG

CHRONOLOGY • CHRONOLOGY

(15 April — 14 May)

APRIL

15. The Daily *Nhan Dan*: FAO decides to grant 150,000 dollars as emergency aid to Vietnam to combat insects harmful to crops.

16. *Hanoi*: At a regular press conference, the spokesman of the Vietnamese Ministry of Foreign Affairs categorically rejects the groundless claim made by the Chinese authorities in the 15 April 1987 statement of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and reaffirms Vietnam's sovereignty over the Hoang Sa and Truong Sa archipelagos.

— *Hanoi*: The 100 th anniversary of the birth of Esperanto is commemorated under the sponsorship of the Vietnam Peace Esperanto Association (VPEA) and the Vietnam UNESCO National Committee.

17. *Paris*: Signing of the Vietnam-French agreement on the French Government's gift of 2,555 tonnes of flour to Vietnam in 1987.

18 — 25: A Soviet Government delegation led by I. S. Belousov, member of the CPSU Central Committee, Minister of the Shipbuilding Industry, pays an official friendship visit to Vietnam.

19. More than 31 million voters in the whole country go to the polls to elect the National Assembly, and the People's Councils at grassroots and district levels. (See article on page 9).

20. A CPV delegation led by Phan Ngoc Tuong, member of the CPV CC, Minister of Construction, attends the 18th session of the Palestinian National Council in Algiers.

24 — 29. A delegation of the Albanian People's Assembly (APA) led by Petro Dode, member of the Albanian Party of Labour Central Committee, Chairman of the People's Assembly, pays an official friendship visit to Vietnam.

27 April — 2 May. A delegation of the Vietnam National Assembly led by Phan Anh, its Vice-Chairman, President of the Vietnam Executive Group in the World Inter-parliamentary Union, attends the 77 th conference of the Union held in Managua.

27 April — 4 May. *Phnom Penh*: Holding of the fourth traditional stage art festival of Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea.

28. The SRV State Council meeting in a regular session, decides to convene the first session of the Eighth National Assembly in late June 1987.

30 April — 10 May. Vietnam attends the annual Paris International Fair. The Vietnamese stand is highly appreciated by the visitors for its improved handicraft articles, especially lacquerware.

MAY

2 — 16. A boxer team of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic made a tour of Vietnam.

3 — 9. Vietnam attends the Seventh Plovdiv Spring International Fair. Lacquer articles of the ARTEX company (Ho Chi Minh City) were awarded a gold medal.

4. Setting up of the Vietnam-Australia Friendship Association.

5 — 9. *Hanoi*: Holding of a seminar workshop "Population and Development Research" with the participation of UNFPA, ESCAP and FAO experts.

7. *Hanoi*: Opening of the eighth session of the Vietnam-Czechoslovakia Commission for Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation.

— The Political Bureau of the CPV Central Committee discusses the problem of renovating and increasing the effectiveness of Vietnam-Soviet economic cooperation.

8. *Hanoi*: Handing over of the Order of the Patriotic War posthumously awarded by the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet to five internationalist Vietnamese combatants who heroically laid down their lives in the Soviet people's great patriotic war.

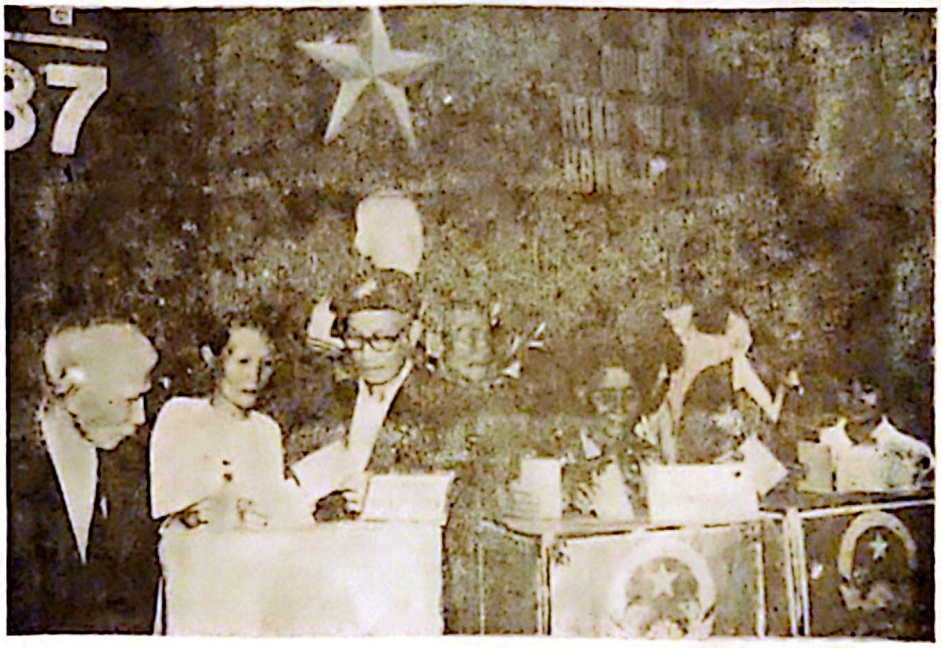
8 — 12. A delegation of the Vietnam Ministry of Material Supplies led by its Minister Hoang Duc Nghi, alternate member of the CPV CC, visits Kampuchea.

14. *Hanoi*: Signing of minutes on the exchange of instruments of ratification of a cooperation agreement for peaceful use of atomic energy between the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and the Government of the Republic of India.

ELECTION TO THE EIGHTH SRV NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

(19 April 1987)

● *Preparations in a constituency in Hanoi.*



● *At a polling station in Ha Nam Ninh province.*

● *Mobile ballot-boxes are brought to hospitals to receive patients' votes.*

Photos: VNA